

Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)

From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Sent: Per FBI: b7A 1, b7D 1, b7E 6
To: Chris Steele
Subject: RE: Greetings!

Hi Chris –

Happy New Year to you and your family as well! It is good to hear from you and I'm glad to hear you enjoyed (b) (6). The pollution is definitely a deterrent to spending too much time there, but it is a fascinating place.

Per FBI: b6 3, b7A 1, b7C 3, b7D 1, b7E 3,4

- Bruce

From: Chris Steele Per FBI: b6 1, b7A 1, b7C 1, b7D 1, b7E 6
Sent: Per FBI: b6 1, b7A 1, b7C 1, b7D 1, b7E 6
To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Subject: Greetings!

Dear Bruce,

A Happy New Year to you and yours. I am back from (b) (6) very impressed with the place other than the pollution of course! Per FBI: b6 2,3,4, b7A 1, b7C 2,3,4, b7D 1, b7E 3,4

Best, Chris

Chris Steele

From: Chris Steele
Sent: Per FBI: b6 3, b7A 1, b7C 3, b7D 1, b7E 3,6
To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Subject: Per FBI: b6 3, b7A 1, b7C 3, b7D 1, b7E 3,6

Per FBI: b6 3, b7A 1, b7C 3, b7D 1, b7E 3,6

Best, Chris

From: Bruce Ohr <Bruce.G.Ohr@usdoj.gov>
Date: Per FBI: b6 1,3, b7A 1, b7C 1,3, b7D 1, b7E 3,6
To: Chris Steele Per FBI: b6 1,3, b7A 1, b7C 1,3, b7D 1, b7E 3,6
Subject: Per FBI: b6 1,3, b7A 1, b7C 1,3, b7D 1, b7E 3,6

Dear Chris –

Many thanks for your email and the updates. I am glad to hear that (b) (6)

Per FBI: b6 1,3, b7A 1, b7C 1,3, b7D 1, b7E 3,6

– Bruce

From: Chris Steele Per FBI: b6 1,3, b7A 1, b7C 1,3, b7D 1, b7E 3,6
Sent: Per FBI: b6 1,3, b7A 1, b7C 1,3, b7D 1, b7E 3,6
To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Subject: Per FBI: b6 1,3, b7A 1, b7C 1,3, b7D 1, b7E 3,6

Dear Bruce,

I hope you are well and have had a good start to the year. We had a great Christmas and New Year break (b) (6)

Per FBI: b6 2,3, b7A 1, b7C 2,3, b7D 1, b7E 3,4

It would be good to catch up properly, either in London or possibly elsewhere in western Europe if you are visiting. Please let me know if you do.

Thanks and Best, Chris

Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)

From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Sent: Per FBI: b6 3, b7A 1, b7C 3, b7D 1, b7E 3,6
To: Chris Steele
Subject: Per FBI: b6 3, b7A 1, b7C 3, b7D 1, b7E 3,6

Thanks Chris!

Per FBI: b6 1, b7A 1, b7C 1, b7D 1, b7E 6

Bruce

> Per FBI: b6 1, b7A 1, b7C 1, b7D 1, b7E 6 Chris Steele Per FBI: b6 1, b7A 1, b7C 1, b7D 1, b7E 6 wrote:

>
> Dear Bruce,

>
> I hope you are well. Per FBI: b6 2,3,4, b7A 1, b7C 2,3,4, b7D 1, b7E 3,4

[REDACTED]

>
> Per FBI: b6 3, b7A 1, b7C 3, b7D 1, b7E 3,4

[REDACTED]

>
> Best, Chris

Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)

From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Sent: Thursday, March 17, 2016 5:43 PM
To: Chris Steele
Subject: RE: CDS- Possible Meeting In Europe

Hi Chris –

I'm afraid nothing has crystallized yet. Would you like to set up a call?

- Bruce

From: Chris Steele (b) (6)
Sent: Thursday, March 17, 2016 1:29 PM
To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Subject: CDS- Possible Meeting In Europe

Dear Bruce,

I hope you are well. Do you have any further news on a possible visit to Europe in the near term where we could meet up? Thanks, Chris

Chris Steele
Director



9-11 Grosvenor Gardens,
London SW1W 0BD

Tel: (b) (6)

Mob: (b) (6)

Email: (b) (6)

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Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)

From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Sent: Per FBI: b7A 1, b7D 1, b7E 6
To: Chris Steele
Subject: Re: Availability for Skypecon With CDS?

Chris -

I wish you and your family a great weekend as well. Talk with you next week!

Bruce

Per FBI: b6 1, b7A 1, b7C 1, b7D 1, b7E 6 Chris Steele Per FBI: b6 1, b7A 1, b7C 1, b7D 1, b7E 6 wrote:

Thanks Bruce, that should work well for me. Have a good weekend.

Best, Chris

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Sent: Per FBI: b7A 1, b7D 1, b7E 6
To: Chris Steele
Subject: RE: Availability for Skypecon With CDS?

Hi Chris -

It's always good to hear from you. Per FBI: b7A 1, b7D 1, b7E 4

[REDACTED]

- Bruce

From: Chris Steele Per FBI: b6 1, b7A 1, b7C 1, b7D 1, b7E 6
Sent: Per FBI: b6 1, b7A 1, b7C 1, b7D 1, b7E 6
To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Subject: Availability for Skypecon With CDS?

Dear Bruce,

I hope all's well with you. Per FBI: b6 1,2, b7A 1, b7C 1,2, b7D 1, b7E 4,6

[REDACTED]

Many thanks and

Best, Chris

Chris Steele
Director
<image001.png>
9-11 Grosvenor Gardens,
London SW1W 0BD
Tel: Per FBI: b6 1, b7C 1
Mob: Per FBI: b6 1, b7C 1

11/00/ Per FBI: b6 1, b7C 1

Email: Per FBI: b6 1, b7C 1

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Chris Steele

From: Chris Steele
Sent: Saturday, July 30, 2016 9:36 PM
To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Subject: Re: CDS In DC

Great to see you and Nellie this morning Bruce. Let's keep in touch on the substantive issues/s. Glenn is happy to speak to you on this if it would help.

Best, Chris

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.
Original Message
From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Sent: Friday, 29 July 2016 22:32
To: Chris Steele
Subject: Re: CDS In DC

Very good. See you at 900.

> On Jul 29, 2016, at 10:00 PM, Chris Steele (b) (6) wrote:

>
> Let's do 0900 then. See you in the lobby. Chris

>
> Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.
> Original Message
> From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
> Sent: Friday, 29 July 2016 17:16
> To: Chris Steele
> Subject: Re: CDS In DC

>
> Sounds good, but we won't let you pay for breakfast! I'll wait for your confirmation on the time.

> Bruce

> On Jul 29, 2016, at 4:24 PM, Chris Steele (b) (6) wrote:

>
> Thanks Bruce. On me at the Mayflower Hotel, Conn Ave NW at 0900 should work but I'll confirm the time for definite this eve if I may. Looking forward to seeing you. Chris

>
> Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.
> From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
> Sent: Friday, 29 July 2016 08:44
> To: Chris Steele
> Subject: RE: CDS In DC

> Dear Chris –

>
> Nice to hear from you! Nellie and I would be up for breakfast tomorrow and can come into town. What would be a good time for you?

> - Bruce

>

> From: Chris Steele (b) (6)

> Sent: Friday, July 29, 2016 5:37 AM

> To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)

> Subject: CDS In DC

>

> Dear Bruce,

>

> Just to let you know I shall be in DC at short notice on business from this PM till Saturday eve, staying at the Mayflower Hotel. If you are in town it would be good to meet up, perhaps for breakfast tomorrow morn? Happy to see Nellie too if she's up for it. Please let me know. Best, Chris

>

> Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

>

Glenn Simpson

From: Glenn Simpson
Sent: Monday, August 22, 2016 10:27 AM
To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Subject: Can u ring

(b) (6)

Sent from my iPhone

Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)

From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Sent: Wednesday, September 21, 2016 8:30 PM
To: Chris Steele
Subject: Re: CDS US Visit

Chris -

Perfect. I'll see you Friday at your hotel at 8 am.

Bruce

> On Sep 21, 2016, at 8:22 PM, Chris Steele (b) (6) wrote:

>

> Thanks Bruce. 0800 on Friday would still be better for me, at the hotel. More useful too all round I think, after my scheduled meetings tomorrow.

>

> Thanks, Chris

>

> Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

> Original Message

> From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)

> Sent: Wednesday, 21 September 2016 18:09

> To: Chris Steele

> Subject: Re: CDS US Visit

>

>

> Hi Chris

>

> Would tomorrow for breakfast still work for you? My calendar is pretty good tomorrow morning, not so good on Friday. An early breakfast on Friday, say 8 am?, would work too. Should I come to your hotel?

>

> Bruce

>

> On Sep 21, 2016, at 3:12 PM, Chris Steele (b) (6) wrote:

>

> Dear Bruce,

>

> I have now arrived in DC and am staying at the Capital Hilton, 1001 16th Street NW. I don't know my client-related programme yet but am keen to meet up with you. Might we provisionally say breakfast on Friday morn or even tomorrow morn if necessary? Look forward to hearing back from you.

>

> Best, Chris

>

> Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

> From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)

> Sent: Friday, 16 September 2016 10:52

> To: Chris Steele

> Subject: RE: CDS US Visit

>

>

> Hi Chris -

>

> It would be great to see you in DC. I'll be out of town Sept 19-21 but should be here the rest of the time. My numbers are office: 202 307 2510 and cell: (b) (6). Let me know what works best for you.

>

>

>

> - Bruce

>

> From: Chris Steele (b) (6)

> Sent: Friday, September 16, 2016 10:42 AM

> To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)

> Subject: CDS US Visit

>

> Dear Bruce,

>

> I hope you are well. I am probably going to visit Washington again in the next couple of weeks on business of mutual interest. I would like to see you again in person and therefore to coordinate diaries. So when are you planning to be in town please?

>

> Thanks and Best, Chris

>

> P.S. I don't think I have up to date cell or landline phone numbers for you. Grateful if you could send me them.

>

>

>

> Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

>

>

>

Chris Steele

From: Chris Steele
Sent: Tuesday, October 18, 2016 7:06 AM
To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Subject: Re: Orbis BI

Thanks Bruce. 2 mins. Chris

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

Original Message

From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)

Sent: Tuesday, 18 October 2016 11:55

To: Chris Steele

Subject: Re: Orbis BI

Chris -

Do you have a moment now? I can log onto Skype.

Bruce

On Oct 18, 2016, at 6:51 AM, Chris Steele (b)(6)

█ wrote:

Dear Bruce,

I hope you are well. If you are in Washington today, I have something quite urgent I would like to discuss with you, preferably by Skype (even before work if you can). Please let me know.

Thanks, Chris

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

Chris Steele

From: Chris Steele
Sent: Per FBI: b7A 1, b7D 1, b7E 4,6
To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Subject: Per FBI: b7A 1, b7D 1, b7E 4,6

OK, trying to Skype you now.

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Sent: Per FBI: b7A 1, b7D 1, b7E 4,6
To: Chris Steele
Subject: Per FBI: b7A 1, b7D 1, b7E 4,6

Chris –

Now would be good if you have time. Thanks!

- Bruce

From: Chris Steele Per FBI: b6 1, b7A 1, b7C 1, b7D 1, b7E 4,6
Sent: Per FBI: b6 1, b7A 1, b7C 1, b7D 1, b7E 4,6
To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Subject: Per FBI: b6 1, b7A 1, b7C 1, b7D 1, b7E 4,6

Thanks Bruce. I could speak to you by Skype anytime over the next 90 minutes. Just let me know. Best,
Chris

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Sent: Per FBI: b7A 1, b7D 1, b7E 4,6
To: Chris Steele
Subject: Per FBI: b7A 1, b7D 1, b7E 4,6

Chris –

Thanks! Let me know if you have a couple of minutes for a Skype call today.

- Bruce

From: Chris Steele Per FBI: b6 1, b7A 1, b7C 1, b7D 1, b7E 4,6
Sent: Tuesday, October 18, 2016 10:04 AM
To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Subject: Per FBI: b6 1, b7A 1, b7C 1, b7D 1, b7E 4,6

Dear Bruce,

Further to our Skypecon earlier today and in terms of terms of background [REDACTED] asked if I could forward you the following information Per FBI: b6 3,4, b7A 1, b7C 3,4, b7D 1, b7E 4

[REDACTED] USG sanctions [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I pass it on for what it's worth.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Per FBI: b7A 1, b7D 1, b7E 4

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Best, Chris

Chris Steele
Director



9-11 Grosvenor Gardens,
London SW1W 0BD

Tel: Per FBI: b6 1, b7C 1

Mob: Per FBI: b6 1, b7C 1

Email: Per FBI: b6 1, b7C 1

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Nellie Ohr

From: Nellie Ohr
Sent: Monday, December 12, 2016 10:11 AM
To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Subject: Fwd: fyi

I assume Glenn means you not me

-----Original Message-----

From: Glenn Simpson (b) (6)
To: Bruce Ohr (b) (6)
Sent: Mon, Dec 12, 2016 10:05 am
Subject: Re: fyi

Please ring if you can

From: Nellie Ohr (b) (6)
Date: Sunday, December 11, 2016 at 1:08 PM
To: Glenn Simpson (b) (6)
Subject: Re: fyi

Thank you!

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 11, 2016, at 12:20 PM, Glenn Simpson (b) (6) wrote:

Torshin-nra article

<https://thinkprogress.org/nra-and-russian-cousin-18f607d40240#.go3lkk2hf>

Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)

From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Sent: Monday, December 26, 2016 9:20 PM
To: CHRIS STEELE
Subject: Re: Happy Christmas!

Chris -

A belated Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your family as well! I wish you the best in 2017.

Bruce

On Dec 24, 2016, at 1:49 PM, CHRIS STEELE (b) (6) wrote:

Dear Bruce,

Just a quick message to wish you, Nellie and all the family Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Successful New Year from us. Take care and good luck with everything.

Best Regards, Chris

Rob Patterson LEFT MESSAGE

Tom K Left message

No FEAR act DONE

(b) (5)



Phone Log for Tuesday, December 13, 2016

1. Called for Bill Busis
2. Glenn Simpson. Some more news. Yestreday 9:27 a.m. Spoke with him.

Rod Rosenstein 5:48 pm (b) (6) DONE CALL JIM CROWELL

(b) (5)

Rob Patterson LEFT MESSAGE, SENT EMAIL

(b) (5)

Call FBI DONE

(b) (5)

(b) (5)



Thu, Feb 23, 2017 6:15 pm

Bruce Ohr (b) (6) Hide

To **Glenn Simpson** (b) (6)

Thank you!

- Bruce

Sent from my iPhone

On Feb 23, 2017, at 10:05 AM, Glenn Simpson (b) (6) wrote:

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2017/02/23/the-kremlin-and-gop-share-a-new-friend-and-boy-does-she-love-guns.html>

Fri, Jan 20, 2017 3:13 pm

Glenn Simpson (b) (6) Hide

To **Bruce Ohr** (b) (6)

Can you call me please?

Sun, Dec 11, 2016 1:08 pm

Bruce Ohr (b) (6) Hide

To **Glenn Simpson** (b) (6)

Thank you!

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 11, 2016, at 12:20 PM, Glenn Simpson (b) (6) wrote:

Torshin-nra article

<https://thinkprogress.org/nra-and-russian-cousin-18f607d40240#.go3lkk2hf>

[1/25/17, 8:50:04 AM] (b) (6): Messages to this chat and calls are now secured with end-to-end encryption.

[1/25/17, 8:50:48 AM] Bruce: This is Bruce.

[1/25/17, 9:16:10 AM] (b) (6): Thanks. Got it. I'll call you later if I may. What time would be convenient please? Best

[1/25/17, 9:38:06 AM] Bruce: I have meetings from 1030 - 1230 my time but am otherwise free up until 1600.

[1/25/17, 12:57:13 PM] (b) (6): Missed Voice Call

[1/25/17, 12:58:06 PM] Bruce: Sorry, I just missed your call. I'm available now.

[1/25/17, 6:23:59 PM] Bruce: On Thursday I should be available most of the morning until 1200 DC time, and then again from 1330 to 1500.

[1/25/17, 6:24:57 PM] (b) (6): Noted, thanks.

[1/27/17, 9:44:23 AM] (b) (6): Hi B! Our guy's OK for the time being but I would like to keep our channel open on him and his situation if that's all right? Many thanks for your support and Best Wishes

[1/27/17, 10:38:37 AM] Bruce: Understood. We will be available if needed. Just or me know.

[1/31/17, 10:52:44 AM] (b) (6): B, doubtless a sad and crazy day for you re-SY. Just wanted to check you are OK, still in situ and able to help locally as discussed, along with your Bureau colleagues, with our guy if the need arises? Many Thanks and Best as Always, C

[1/31/17, 10:55:31 AM] Bruce: Yes, a crazy day. I'm still here and able to help as discussed. I'll let you know if that changes.

Thanks!

[1/31/17, 11:12:09 AM] (b) (6): Thanks. You have my sympathy and support. If you end up out though, I really need another (Bureau?) contact point/number who is briefed. We can't allow our guy to be forced to go back home. It would be disastrous all round, though his position right now looks stable. A million thanks. C

[1/31/17, 5:48:09 PM] Bruce: Understood. I can certainly give you an FBI contact if it becomes necessary.

[2/10/17, 10:16:29 AM] (b) (6): B, Hi. Nothing dramatically new to report from here but I just wanted to check you were OK, still in place and able to stay in touch? Perhaps we could have a word on FaceTime over the weekend? Many thanks and Best as Always, C

[2/10/17, 11:07:40 AM] Bruce: Good to hear from you. I'm still here and available to chat. Happy to talk this weekend. When is a good time for you?

[2/10/17, 11:09:20 AM] (b) (6): Maybe 1000 Saturday morning your time? Or thereafter. C

[2/10/17, 11:10:40 AM] Bruce: That time is good for me. Thanks!

[3/7/17, 4:53:26 AM] (b) (6): Would it be possible to speak later today please? We're very concerned by the Grassley letter and it's possible implications for us, our operations and our sources. We need some reassurance. Many thanks

[3/7/17, 6:57:09 AM] Bruce: Sure. Would 130 today, DC time, work?

[3/7/17, 6:59:19 AM] (b) (6): Yes thanks it would. Sorry to bother you so early but I know you'll appreciate why we are concerned.

[3/7/17, 6:59:50 AM] Bruce: Of course.

[3/7/17, 1:27:39 PM] Bruce: My Skype app is acting up. Can we use the Whatapp voice call?

[3/7/17, 1:30:01 PM] Bruce: I think my skype is working now if you want to call me.

[3/7/17, 1:47:31 PM] (b) (6): Thanks for that, old friend. Please do fight our cause and keep in touch. Really fundamental issues at stake here. Very Best

[3/8/17, 8:26:41 AM] Bruce: Likewise, hang in there!

[3/9/17, 4:01:39 PM] (b) (6): Missed Voice Call

[3/9/17, 7:21:53 AM] (b) (6): Any news yet? Thanks

[3/11/17, 4:19:53 PM] (b) (6): Please call me when you can. Thanks

[3/12/17, 6:47:31 AM] Bruce: Sorry, I was out of town with no cell service for a few days. Let me know when you can talk.

[3/12/17, 7:03:43 AM] (b) (6): I can talk now though I know it's early for you.

[3/15/17, 8:20:41 AM] (b) (6): It would be useful to have a Whatsapp call later today if possible. I have some points to raise and would appreciate an update from your end. Just let me know when would suit. Many thanks as always

[3/15/17, 8:58:46 AM] Bruce: Would 1 pm DC time work for you? Only 4 hours time difference, is that right?

[3/15/17, 9:03:28 AM] (b) (6): Yes, thanks, that works and I believe we are only plus 4 hours at the mo. Best

[3/16/17, 7:52:21 PM] (b) (6): Hi! Apparently Laura Perkins is the DoJ official responsible for overseeing the FCPA/DPA applied to Bilfinger, our non-paying German engineering company client. Best

[3/17/17, 1:00:41 PM] Bruce: Thanks. Have a good weekend.

[3/18/17, 1:34:45 PM] (b) (6): Hi! Just wondering if you had any news? Obviously we're a bit apprehensive given Comey's scheduled appearance at Congress on Monday. Hoping that important firewalls will hold. Many thanks,

[3/18/17, 5:32:50 PM] Bruce: Sorry, no new news. I believe my earlier information is still accurate. I will let you know immediately if there is any change.

[3/24/17, 7:15:12 AM] (b) (6): Hi Bruce, a surreal week for me. Inter alia, I was in Westminster Underground station when the terrorist attack happened! Otherwise we understand an approach from the Senate Intelligence Committee to us is imminent. I would like to discuss this and our response with you in the next couple of days if possible. Please let me know when might suit? Many thanks and Best, Chris

[3/24/17, 5:34:16 PM] Bruce: Wow, that's nuts. Hope you are okay. We can chat this weekend if you are available. Would sometime on Sunday work for you? I'm pretty open.

[3/24/17, 6:08:02 PM] (b) (6): Thanks Bruce. Let's speak on Sunday eve UK time, maybe 1400 or 1500 EST if that works for you? Best

[3/24/17, 6:40:17 PM] Bruce: 1400 east coast time on Sunday will work. Thanks and talk with you then.

[3/30/17, 9:07:46 AM] (b) (6): Hi Bruce, any news? The Senate Intel Committee is leaking like a sieve which is giving us pause for thought on engagement. (b) (6) Hopefully speak soon. Best, Chris

[3/30/17, 9:15:24 AM] Bruce: Chris, no news on this end, aside from what I'm reading in the papers. Just amazing. (b) (6)

(b) (6)
(b) (6) Let me know if you would like to talk.

[5/2/17, 10:19:00 AM] (b) (6): Dear Bruce, I would be grateful for a word over the next couple of days. Could we fix a time for a Whatsapp call please. Many thanks, Chris

[5/2/17, 10:56:11 AM] Bruce: Chris, of course. Would tomorrow at 1 pm London time work for you? Bruce

[5/2/17, 11:43:01 AM] (b) (6): Yes thanks, that's good for me. Let's speak then.

[5/2/17, 2:40:12 PM] Bruce: Excellent. Talk with you soon.

[5/9/17, 7:15:04 PM] (b) (6): B, obviously it's chaotic with you over there right now but we should probably talk again over the next couple of days if you can. Do let me know what might work. Best

[5/9/17, 11:15:03 PM] Bruce: Sure. Would Wednesday at 7 pm London time work for you?

[5/10/17, 4:07:47 AM] (b) (6): Yes, thanks, that's fine for me.

[5/10/17, 4:08:05 AM] (b) (6): Good luck with everything today!

[5/12/17, 4:22:56 PM] Bruce: Thanks again for your time on Wednesday. Do you have time for a short follow up call sometime this weekend?

[5/12/17, 5:11:09 PM] (b) (6): Yes, of course. Perhaps sometime tomorrow. When might suit?

[5/12/17, 7:37:15 PM] Bruce: Would 3 pm your time work? I'm pretty open so just let me know. Thanks!

[5/13/17, 7:54:46 AM] (b) (6): Fine, or possibly even at 2 pm our time if that works for you? Best

[5/13/17, 8:21:22 AM] Bruce: 2 pm your time is good. It will be quick. Thanks!

[5/15/17, 9:45:09 AM] (b) (6): B, Per FBI: b6 4, b7C 4
(b) (6) about the question we discussed on Saturday I'm pleased to say yes, we should go ahead with it. Best C

[5/15/17, 1:31:06 PM] Bruce: Thanks! I will let them know and we will follow up.

[5/15/17, 2:42:22 PM] Bruce: Thanks again. I chatted with my colleagues and can give you an update when you have a minute.

[6/22/17, 2:21:29 PM] (b) (6): Hi Bruce, is there any news on reengagement yet? Anything we could do to help from this end? Grateful for an update. Thanks and Best, Chris

[6/22/17, 11:19:47 PM] Bruce: I will inquire and let you know

[6/24/17, 6:45:42 AM] Bruce: Still in process. My colleagues have made the request, but they will inquire again.

[7/16/17, 5:47:26 PM] (b) (6): Hi Bruce, hope you're enjoying the summer. I spoke to Per FBI: b6 4, b7C 4 last week and they assured me

they would not stand in the way of our reengagement with the Bureau. They thought the admin might take a few weeks but we seem good to go. Please pass this on as appropriate. Crazy week over there just past!
Best, Chris

[7/16/17, 5:49:41 PM] Bruce: Hi Chris, it's good to hear from you. Hope all is well. I will pass this along to my colleagues. Thanks!

[8/6/17, 12:28:04 PM] (b) (6): Hi Bruce, hope you're well and getting some holiday with the family. Whenever convenient I would like a chat, there's a lot going on and we are frustrated with how long this reengagement with the Bureau and Mueller is taking. Anything you could do to accelerate the process would be much appreciated. There are some new, perishable, operational opportunities which we do not want to miss out on. Best to All, Chris

[8/6/17, 1:45:56 PM] Bruce: Chris, good to hear from you. Would tomorrow morning at 9 am D.C. time work for you? Thanks!

[8/6/17, 7:43:27 PM] (b) (6): Thanks. Let's try for that though (b) (6)

Best, Chris

[8/6/17, 7:48:53 PM] Bruce: No worries. Would Tuesday be better?

[8/7/17, 8:17:39 AM] (b) (6): Probably. What are your time windows tomorrow? Thanks

[8/7/17, 8:40:19 AM] Bruce: Anytime in the morning before 11, DC time. Will that work?

[8/7/17, 9:06:29 AM] (b) (6): Yes, should do. Probably around 1000 Eastern time.

[8/7/17, 9:27:39 AM] Bruce: Perfect. I'll call you then.

[9/7/17, 5:11:55 AM] (b) (6): Hi Bruce, I appreciate this might be tricky but I would appreciate a brief chat about latest developments. Over to you and Best

[9/7/17, 7:50:01 AM] Bruce: Sure. Would tomorrow morning at 8 am D.C. time work for you?

[9/7/17, 11:45:02 AM] (b) (6): Thanks but (b) (6)

(b) (6) So maybe late this eve, UK time, or Saturday? Best

[9/7/17, 2:50:34 PM] Bruce: It's getting pretty late over there. Shall we say Saturday? What time is best for you?

[9/7/17, 2:52:07 PM] (b) (6): 1300 or 1400 UK time depending on whether you need a lie-in?!

[9/7/17, 2:56:41 PM] Bruce: 1300 U.K. time on Saturday will work. Thanks!

[9/9/17, 6:13:52 AM] (b) (6): (b) (6)

(b) (6) I'll call you when we finish, probably around 1330 UK time. Thanks

[9/9/17, 6:15:30 AM] (b) (6): (b) (6)

[9/9/17, 7:34:37 AM] Bruce: Sounds like fun! No rush, I'll be here whenever.

[9/9/17, 8:13:40 AM] (b) (6): Missed Voice Call

[10/26/17, 7:08:53 PM] (b) (6): Missed Voice Call

[10/26/17, 7:09:48 PM] (b) (6): Missed Voice Call

[10/26/17, 7:12:47 PM] (b) (6): Hi Bruce. Can we have a word tomorrow please? Just seen a story in the media about the Bureau handing over docs to Congress about my work and relationship with them. Very concerned about this. Peoples lives may be engangered. I shall also reach out to my other (SC) contacts on this issue tomorrow. Thanks, Chris

[10/27/17, 7:27:06 PM] Bruce: Chris - my apologies, just saw your message. I am available for a call tomorrow am.

[10/27/17, 7:33:20 PM] (b) (6): Thanks Bruce, just off to bed here now! Shall we speak around 0900 your time? Best Chris

[10/27/17, 7:57:03 PM] Bruce: That sounds good. Talk with you tomorrow.

[10/30/17, 4:07:46 PM] (b) (6): Bruce, having spoken with Glenn in London today, I now understand and appreciate what you were talking about on Saturday. Love and Best Wishes to you, Nellie and all the family.

[11/1/17, 4:02:43 AM] (b) (6): Bruce, was there any feedback on my question of the other day? Thanks, Chris

[11/8/17, 11:32:22 AM] (b) (6): Missed Voice Call

[11/8/17, 2:02:32 PM] (b) (6): Hi Bruce. If you are able, I would welcome a quick word. Many thanks

[11/8/17, 2:32:10 PM] Bruce: Chris - of course. Are you available now? If not, when is a good time?

[11/8/17, 4:31:38 PM] (b) (6): Missed Voice Call

[11/11/17, 10:36:40 AM] (b) (6): Hi Bruce, sorry to bother you on a Saturday but we were wondering if there was any response to the questions I raised last week? I'm at home this weekend. Thanks and Best, Chris

[11/11/17, 10:57:43 AM] Bruce: Chris, I have passed on the questions but haven't gotten an answer yet. I will let you know as soon as I hear anything. Thanks. - Bruce

[11/11/17, 10:58:36 AM] (b) (6): Many thanks. Much appreciated. Chris

[11/18/17, 4:22:14 PM] (b) (6): Dear Bruce, I hope you and the family are well. It's been another tough week here under the media spotlight and with legal pressures bearing down on us. I am presuming you've heard nothing back from your SC colleagues on the issues you kindly put to them from me. We have heard nothing from them either. To say this is disappointing would be an understatement! Certain people have been willing to risk everything to engage with them in an effort to help them reach the truth. Also, we remain in the dark as to what has been briefed to congress about us, our assets and previous work. I know you understand the importance of all this and have done your very best to support us, but we would be grateful if you could continue to communicate these sentiments to them. Sincere thanks for everything you are doing and I hope to speak to you again soon.

Best, Chris

[11/18/17, 5:22:42 PM] Bruce: Chris, thanks for reaching out. I understand the difficulties and uncertainty you are experiencing. I

haven't heard anything but I will reach out again and ask for an update. Let's plan to talk early in the week.

- Bruce

[11/27/17, 10:02:01 AM] (b) (6): Hi Bruce, is there any chance we could have a catch-up Whatsapp call this eve GMT, maybe around 1500 with you? Otherwise tomorrow eve GMT? Many thanks, Chris

[11/27/17, 10:48:18 AM] Bruce: Chris - I have a meeting ending at 1500 today that might spill over a few minutes. Would 1515 work for you?

[11/27/17, 10:51:51 AM] (b) (6): Yes, of course. C

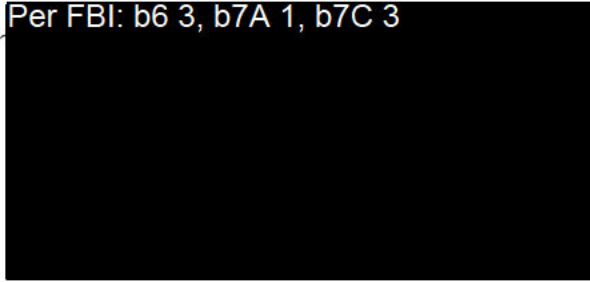
[11/27/17, 11:45:20 AM] Bruce: I will call you then.

Chris

- CP met w. S., I

- From said over a barrel

Per FBI: b6 3, b7A 1, b7C 3



- Les. by

Per FBI: b6 3, b7C 3

Gym dope

Per FBI:
b6 2, b7C
2

has 2
Glen has a 9

Glenn

Sergei
Milian

alkla

Per FBI: b6 3,4,
b7C 3,4

RA Ch d

Comm. in the USA
Atlanta

Per FBI: b6
3,4, b7C 3,4

Page ✓

Per FBI: b6 3,4,
b7C 3,4

Alfa

Per FBI: b6 3,4, b7C
3,4

Global Energy Capital

Glenn

Possible intermediaries:

1. Per FBI: (b)(1) 1, (b)(3) 1, (b)(6) 3,4, (b)(7)(C) 3,4, (b)(7)(E) 4

2.

3.

(I may have the name slightly wrong). Business partner of Carter Page. Alleged to be an IO, as well as the "brains" behind Page's company Global Energy Capital.

- Person likely to be hid by other side
so will need protection
- They can't reach him, Glen doesn't know
name.
- Articles will make it clear to KIS who
this is.
- Cheri has info that can get us to him.

Glen

Jan 20

Restab. Energy

Chris
Jan 21

Exit this next week
Avoided media

10 30
PM 5853

Serious potential issue
said person alive & well
Postal Tax Code

Don't have his clearance to speak on
it gets into a real pickle.

It's default is to keep his head down.

Will be scared of us just skinned up

issue of existence in public forum

Per FBI: b3 1, b6 1,2,4, b7C 1,2,4, b7D 1,2, b7E 3,4

He may need help quickly

Gen. Brance
Another guy who he trusts & has reached out
to him.

Chris
1/25/17

- Mary tough
- Update:
 - He went to go.
 - Primarily b/c source lists
 - asking Qs. He has
 - low.
- New semi. emerged.

Per FBI: b3 1, b6 1,4, b7C 1,4, b7D 1,2, b7E 3,4



- They will reach
out to ~~Wing~~ tomorrow
to see where he is.
- Absolute game

Chris - 2/14/17

- Billings

Per FBI: b6 4, b7A 1, b7C 4

- Guy doing bus
now.
d

Snowden
report

my course
next 2 weeks
5

copy

3/12

G letter

invite

guy

3/15

asked, wld say:

- Reported in that they could go to US on 4 at the time

- Must protect sources.

Per FBI: b6 4, b7A 1, b7C 4

knows

(b)(6)

wants to help
STrans approach from him,
apparently

- Wld want to know what
is happening.

- Written responses, possibly
wld be limited

- Worried about Cassidy
requests Any into time
FBI?

- Special prosecutor
right to question in UK?

- NP Agreement on Germany
@ that owes \$
Wangstblawing
Bilfinger
- Control Risk
- KPMG

3/26/71

1) Expecting letter from

Sen Intel Bureau

asking for answers,

2) Expecting letter from

Cassidy. Glen got
one asking for sources

3) Talking to Al [redacted] they will probably have to
meet in Paris. Can
accept another [redacted] -
will need to run by
people

4) Tell story during no spoken
w. Sen Intel Bureau.

5) They want to be sure
~~we~~ my colleagues
know their plan

6) Expect letters during
week. Cassidy will
probably make his letters
public.

Whoever trying to be
cooperatively, if seems -

7) Cassidy letter if answered
will put sources at risk.

They will be very circumspect
in all questions.

Per FBI:
b6 1,4,
b7A 1,
b7C 1,4

Per FBI: b6 1,4, b7A
1, b7C 1,4

Call w/ Chris

5/10/17

Very concerned abt Comey's
Army - afraid they will be
exposed

Got letter from Senate Intel
Comm. Asked them 3 Q:

1) What info did you ~~share~~ the
US govt?

2) What was the scope of your
investig.?

3) Do you have any other info

Please ^{think} let FBI ^{would} assist in our ^{investig.} ^{new}
Also Per FBI: b6 1.4,
b7C 1.4, b7D 2 still on the ^{protection}
has own channels

Call w Chris:

AIR FORCE INNS

5/3/17

Doing better. Business good.

Court case - ~~to be~~ they
are trying to force into out

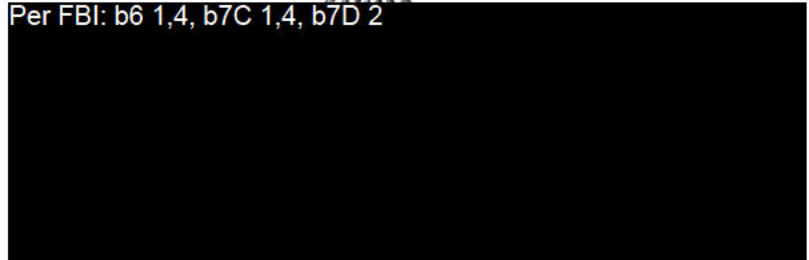
Grassley - open session
w Comey today.

Happy w how we responded
to Mouse. But Grassley
is trying to make them out
as cowboys.

Source is stable.

AIR FORCE INNS

Per FBI: b6 1,4, b7C 1,4, b7D 2



He is involved in some in Odessa



working at Fr., Ger, UK-

Russian intelligence

He has talked in current FBI
trying to help directly.

Provide laws in UK narrower
than US. complicated lawsuit.

Just be aware. He to Glen
going to see Chris

AIR FORCE INNS



They will bring a letter
Jon Winter bringing over a
letter separately.
They are trying to keep a
low profile as much as
possible.

They can't tell Hoover / Gen
off

Per FBI: b6 1,4, b7C 1,4

Per FBI: b6 1,4, b7C 1,4

(b) (6)

They have all worked to
support U.S. Iran, CWI's

Per FBI: b6 1,4, b7C 1,4

5/13

9:01

Will be involved to do that

Need to check w/ colleagues

& from employees

But will like to do that

(b) (6)

minimalist

response for now

ADJ's material - Fr & elsewhere in Eur, but
US angles

LoPia/Putin

Will check & get back to me

3/15

Told him FBI will

Per FBI: b6 4, b7C 4

He is fine with

that, appreciates going by the book

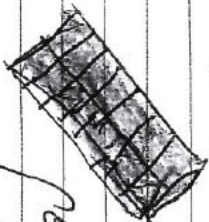
Per FBI: b6 1,4, b7C 1,4

8/8/17

Per FBI:
b6 4, b7C
4

Chris

Playing management. Build up
in pressure in Congress. We seek
assured there is no problem.



Somebody from part
perched up & away by

Q over to debriefing.

Still some obstacles, risks, call
like some support on the ground
to secure it.

Ed of another follow up from
last year.

Both risky. Will want support.

ES People in shift in last year
hard good dialogue

Long remember he's like - 50 ~~or~~
want to help, but abstract
by that.

Stewart's problem is that I want
to help that and want to
see it all played out in the
press for political points.

Will be away end of this week
beginning of this week

Per
FBI: b6
4, b7C
4

is that I will
be there if they message. They
know as a part.

(b) (6)

SEP 1953 numbers -

DP by Germany as -

US has from at meeting

60 days from 5/19.

How far away he is going

London Parkers is in charge

& over.

They say see in Germany

AS

Rein in France

of Aika L who is signed to

take out (SEM) is concerned

staying a lot & had still with

Aik

9/9/17

- Glen was out this week
- Sub got the file, should be worried
-
- Reengagement - prob next week. Heard from him as.
- Dossier - tl held up.

11/8/17

Not heavy back for contact
in office

1) - Two direct to long
still concerned.

2) opportunity plus week -
no response. In UK.
to follow up.

Per FBI: b6 1,3, b7C 1,3, b7D 2

Stay in news today at
HRC of 20 classes
to talk with [redacted]

to add 7 statements from

Per FBI: b6 3, b7C 3

Master in R/saved,
relating:

11/27/17

3-6-17
done what they
said.

Per
FBI:
b6 4,
b7C 4

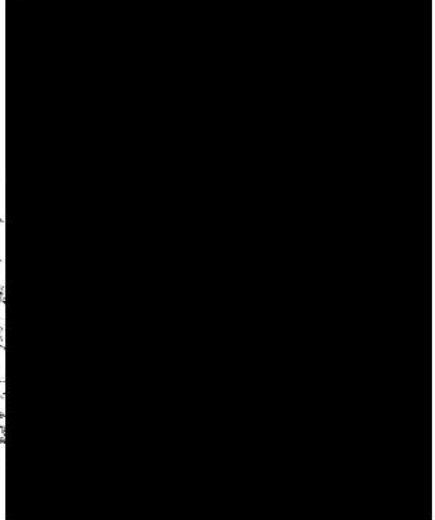
Went to Hayes court
regard to subject's
in business case in
NY. I will not
to state and but
might not work
to other areas.

People ~~in~~
will not only be
followed up
~~by~~
contacted. Co. 8
gather what they
can. I will
want to come in
fig. 22 person is
uncomfortable person.
what person is
some help in
job.

- Did things
- lot of
- based on information
long time
apr.
- 5/17
- 11/27/17

Per
FBI:
b6 4,
b7C
4

Per FBI: b6 1,4, b7C 1,4, b7D
2



Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)

From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Sent: Wednesday, March 23, 2016 2:47 PM
To: Nellie Ohr
Subject: Re: question for Nellie (b) (7)(E), - per Crim

Cool!

On Mar 23, 2016, at 2:06 PM, Nellie Ohr (b) (6) wrote:

Sure!

-----Original Message-----

From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG) (ODAG) <Bruce.G.Ohr@usdoj.gov>
To: Nellie Ohr (b) (6)
Sent: Wed, Mar 23, 2016 1:58 pm
Subject: Fwd: question for Nellie (b) (7)(E), - per Crim

Hi honey!

I trust you are okay with this?

Love, B

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Holtyn, Lisa (OCDETF)" (b) (6) >
Date: March 23, 2016 at 12:43:28 PM EDT
To: "Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)" <bruhr@jmd.usdoj.gov<mailto:brohr@jmd.usdoj.gov>>
Subject: question for Nellie (b) (7)(E), - per Crim

Hi Bruce,

Hope you guys are having a great vacation. I just met with Ivana Nizich (she told me both she and her husband used to work for you, Bruce – small world!) She and Joe Wheatley are working on one of the (b) (7)(E), - per Crim and trying to get some general background info that may be helpful to them. I told her that Nellie might be a great resource, but I didn't want to reach out to her directly without asking you first so as not to put her on the spot. Do you think she would be comfortable with talking to them, and would it present any conflict of interest issues for her or for you?

Thanks!
Lisa

Nellie Ohr

From: Nellie Ohr
Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2016 8:57 AM
To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Subject: Re: Bahrain News Agency | Regional workshop on counterterrorism held

Cool!

-----Original Message-----

From: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG) (ODAG) <Bruce.G.Ohr@usdoj.gov>
To: Nellie Ohr (b) (6)
Sent: Wed, Apr 13, 2016 3:47 am
Subject: Fwd: Bahrain News Agency | Regional workshop on counterterrorism held

Hi honey,

We made the news!

Love, B

Begin forwarded message:

From: (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), (b) (7)(E), - per FBI >
Date: April 13, 2016 at 7:48:47 AM GMT+1
To: "Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)" <brohr@imd.usdoj.gov<mailto:brohr@imd.usdoj.gov>>, (b) (6) (NSD)"
(b) (6) (b) (6), (b) (7)(C), (b) (7)(E), - per FBI >>, "Jacobson, Michael N" <JacobsonMN@state.gov<mailto:JacobsonMN@state.gov>>
Subject: Bahrain News Agency | Regional workshop on counterterrorism held

<http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/721659>

FYSA

(b) (6), (b) (7)(C), (b) (7)(E), - per FBI

Nellie Ohr

From: Nellie Ohr
Sent: Monday, December 12, 2016 10:11 AM
To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Subject: Fwd: fyi

I assume Glenn means you not me

-----Original Message-----

From: Glenn Simpson [REDACTED]
To: Bruce Ohr (b) (6) [REDACTED]
Sent: Mon, Dec 12, 2016 10:05 am
Subject: Re: fyi

Please ring if you can

From: Nellie Ohr (b) (6) [REDACTED]
Date: Sunday, December 11, 2016 at 1:08 PM
To: Glenn Simpson [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: fyi

Thank you!

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 11, 2016, at 12:20 PM, Glenn Simpson [REDACTED] wrote:

Torshin-nra article

<https://thinkprogress.org/nra-and-russian-cousin-18f607d40240#.go3lkk2hf>

Nellie Ohr

From: Nellie Ohr
Sent: Monday, September 05, 2016 7:29 PM
To: Holtyn, Lisa (OCDETF); Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Subject: Fwd: Korzhakov speaks AND crime news

I'm pasting in this article about the buying and selling of official positions. Turns out a US citizen was involved. Plus other crime news below.

Conveniently in English <http://en.crimerrussia.ru/corruption/positions-for-sale-how-much-to-become-a-governmental-official/?lang=ru>

Positions for sale: How much to become a governmental official?

4 Sept 2016

There is a special category of corruption crimes that almost always remain unpunished. They are committed by so-called 'kingmakers' or 'fixers' selling positions in governmental institutions, enforcement structures, and large companies. Bitter struggle is raging in quiet ministerial and departmental offices for sinecures and 'grave trains' allowing to receive good bribes. Upon purchasing the desired position, the civil servant starts using various corruption schemes to compensate the incurred costs. Obviously, the public and state interests are the last thing he is concerned about.

Everything is bought and sold

Such machinations are rarely detected by law enforcement authorities because all parties to the deal are happy: the seller gets good money, while the buyer – powers that can be used at his own discretion. No one is willing to show off such a deal.

In the recent years, brokage became a common practice in many governmental structures. Wherever duties of officials can generate illegal profits, fat jobs are sold out like hot cakes – be it a chair in a district administration or a high post in a federal ministry. Demand always creates supply.

There are plenty of semi-criminal businessmen in Russia willing to invest considerable money into a chair in a governmental structure – that not only allows to make illegal profits, but also brings numerous privileges available only to officials. Very often an oligarch – the main beneficiary – remains in the shadow, while the important chair is occupied by his henchman – a trusted aide who does not make any decisions and only creates an illusion of work. Of course, all the financial flows stay under control of the real master.

Media normally learn about such type of swindling when positions are sold by adventurous persons who, in fact, have no relation to staff appointment mechanisms in governmental structures. The defrauded purchasers address law enforcement authorities in a hope to return millions of rubles paid to the scammers. The number of such machinations grows every year because people are willing to pay really big money for prestigious positions.

The fake fixers exploit the firm belief of businessmen that money can resolve any issue with state bureaucrats. The unscrupulous scammers take advantage of the secrecy surrounding administrative structures and inability of perspective buyers to verify whether the promised appointment is real or not. The fraudsters meet with their victims in expensive restaurants, show fake service ID's and other attributes of power. They arrive on luxury cars with governmental license plates, pretend to take phone calls from influential officials, complain on work load...

Businessmen, who understand very well that staffing issues in many governmental agencies are resolved by money, lose their cautiousness and take the bait.

Post in district administration for mullion rubles

The real kingmakers rarely attract attention of law enforcement authorities. Normally, police and special services catch not true fixers, but fraudsters pretending to be them. Files of arrested law enforcement officers often have a note: "Had no real possibility to affect the matter".

For example, recently a 40-year-old man tried to sell a cushy job in the Administration of the Moscow District of St.

Petersburg for 1 million rubles.

According to the St. Petersburg [police press service](#), the investigation of this criminal case is completed, and the materials have been submitted to court for examination of the merits of the case. Investigators of the Administration for the Central District of the General Administration for St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) of the Russian Federation have charged the detained suspect under part 3 of Article 30 and part 3 of Article 159 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (Attempted Swindling on a large scale).

According to the law enforcement authorities, a person have addressed police because he suspected that a 40-year-old St. Petersburg resident, who had offered him to buy a prestigious position in the district administration, had no relation to the human resources management in this municipal authority. The suspect was arrested on April 27, 2016 in a restaurant located on Ligovsky avenue in St. Petersburg during a meeting with the potential buyer. Currently the fraudster is waiting for the trial.

A sentence has been already [announced](#) in another high-profile brokage case. The Tverskoy District Court of Moscow has found that Gennady Astsurov, 69 years old, and Mikhail Kharsiev, 23 years old, were selling the post of an Aide to the Deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation for \$155 thousand.

According to the [official statement](#) of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation, the convicted criminals have defrauded a person familiar to them claiming that they can assist with this appointment. If fact, they never intended to keep that promise. Interestingly, Astsurov and Kharsiev themselves were Aides to a Deputy of the State Duma – they used this fact to make their scam more convincing.

The fraudsters were arrested by the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) in a Moscow café immediately after receiving a partial payment from the victim. The Tverskoy District Court of Moscow has found them guilty under part 3 of Article 30 and part 4 of Article 159 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (Attempted Swindling committed by an organized group on an especially large scale). Mikhail Kharsiev was sentenced to 3 years in a general regime penal colony; Gennady Astsurov was sentenced to the same term conditionally – the court has taken into consideration his senior age.

US citizen selling position in Russian Federal Fishing Agency

However, not all sellers of posts are fraudsters – even if they are accused of fraud. Top-level officials often deny any connections with the intermediaries in such deals. Law enforcement authorities, being unable to prove the fact of brokage, have to charge the intermediaries under Article 159 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation – while the high-ranked masterminds escape the liability.

For example, members of an organized crime group involving George Hager, an American citizen, told the FSB the name of an influential official in the Federal Fishing Agency of the Russian Federation who had promised to assist in appointing a certain person to a senior position in this agency for a fee of \$7 million payable to the intermediaries. It was [Yuri Khokhlov](#), the Counselor of the Head of the Federal Fishing Agency, who has immediately denied all corruption accusation and soon retired from his post. Despite the public uproar, he was never prosecuted in the framework of this case.

The criminal group involved George Hager, an American with Belorussian roots, Fanil Sabirianov, ex-official from the Republic of Bashkortostan, and Minkail Umaev, a businessman operating in Ingushetia and Chechnya.

According to the investigation, these three people told the potential purchaser that they have good connections in the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation and in the Russian Government. The suspects offered the buyer, whose name was not disclosed, a senior position in the Federal Fishing Agency. Hager, Umaev, and Sabirianov explained that most of the requested \$7 million fee will be spent on bribing high-ranked officials in the federal agency responsible for management and protection of the national fish resources.

The potential buyer of this cushy job did not believe the intermediaries and addressed the FSB – so all further negotiations were conducted under surveillance of the operatives. In the end of May 2016 George Hager was arrested in Roberto restaurant on Rozhdestvensky boulevard in Moscow immediately after receiving \$300 thousand as the first installment. The American quickly agreed to collaborate with the investigation and brought the money to his accomplices on Nikitsky boulevard – where FSB officers have arrested Fanil Sabirianov and Minkail Umaev. Questionings started. The members of the criminal group told the operatives that their intention was to arrange the appointment of the client to the superior position through Yuri Khokhlov, the Counselor of the Head of the Federal Fishing Agency. During the special operation, Hager, Umaev, and Sabirianov attempted to give a paper replica of \$3 million to the federal official – but Khokhlov refused to take the money. He said that this is a provocation. Therefore, his involvement into the corruption scheme could not be proven. Still, the scandal has resulted in his resignation from the Federal Fishing Agency of the Russian Federation.

George Hager, Minkail Umaev, and Fanil Sabirianov are currently waiting for the trial. All of them have been charged under part 4 of Article 159 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (Swindling on an especially large scale committed by an organized group by previous concert).

“You must know whom to pay and how much”

A Human Resources Department officer in a federal agency agreed to talk with the CrimeRussia journalist on condition of anonymity.

“If I tell you how appointments are being made in our organization, I will be held liable. They will set the dogs on

me," – Mikhail Alekseev (fictitious name) expressed his concerns.

An experienced human resources specialist, he found his first job through good connections back in the 1980s. Upon graduation, he did not want to go through the job placement system – which could send him to a distant Rassvet (Sunrise) village as a teacher of history. His aunt was familiar with an influential female official who helped the young graduate. Monetary bribes were not paid for employment assistance at that time, but his family had to be friends with the patroness: give her expensive presents on holidays, invite to family events, run small errands, etc. "My father had to drive that lady to her cottage on week-ends, help her with renovations, move furniture. My mother helped her in the kitchen when the patroness was making banquettes for important people. My parents considered this a normal situation because the management was favorable to their son," – Mikhail Alekseev told.

But now a position in the institution where he works costs much more than simple presents and favors. Everything has its price. For instance, the current Head of this organization has paid 25 million rubles to his Moscow patrons for the chair. His Deputy's chair costs some 15 million rubles. To become an entry-level employee, one has to pay only 100 thousand rubles – but right connections are still required. You must know whom to pay and how much – otherwise you might be defrauded by a scammer.

Similar staffing policies are used in other governmental institutions as well. Of course, each organization has its own specific nuances. The more profitable – from the bribe-taking point of view – is a position, the more you have to pay for it. The most expensive are positions in control and watchdog authorities – where you can first put pressure on somebody and then offer him a solution for a good reward.

"Officials make good money on oil and gas companies, construction businesses, industrial enterprises, and trade and service companies. Therefore, governmental positions overseeing these sectors of economy are worth millions of rubles at the regional level and millions of dollars – at the federal level. And each oligarch wants to seat his own henchman in such a chair," – the human resources specialist said.

"Official is not a surgeon: he won't cut away from you too much"

According to Mikhail Alekseev, not only monies are required to be appointed to a good position, but right connections as well. You can't just bring a case of cash and become an official – you must demonstrate that you belong to that circle. The only way to gain trust of corrupt civil servants is to find a guarantor well-known for his loyalty to the superiors.

According to the human resources specialist, law enforcement authorities never express interest towards governmental appointments and don't ask whether it was for a bribe or not. Of course, the colleagues know this precisely, but keep silence. No one needs issues and reputation of a truth-seeker that can destroy an official's career.

"I had never taken bribes for referring somebody to my boss. The money flow directly to the pockets of the management, I get nothing. But I can tell about available vacancies or provide intermediary contact information to an interested person. I can also help to revise the resume. Sometimes I participate in negotiations – but only in relation to entry-level staff. Everything else is above my level," – Mikhail admitted.

He believes that there is nothing wrong with helping people to find a job. After all, an official is not a surgeon: he won't cut away from you too much.

-----Original Message-----

From: Nellie Ohr (b) (6)

To: (b) (6) Nellie Email ; (b) (6) Allensworth ; (b) (6)

Sent: Mon, Sep 5, 2016 5:03 pm

Subject: Re: Korzhakov speaks

[This is a followup on a story that a man who had criticized Kadyrov had gone missing.

Пропавший критик Кадырова нашелся на дне рождения у друга

[beware, this was originally published in life.ru] <http://crimerussia.ru/gover/propavshiy-kritik-kadyrova-nashelsya-na-dne-rozhdeniya-u-druga/>

— Сообщения о моей смерти сильно преувеличены, — заявил Лайфу вечером 3 сентября сам Мартагов по телефону. Он подтвердил, что жив и невредим и едет домой. [his phone battery ran out so he couldn't tell his family]

p.s. Korzhakov's story about "truckloads of money for Shuvalov" is being followed up on by Navalny

[16:35 Навальный обратится в ФСБ и СК с требованием проверить сообщение в СМИ о «грузовиках денег» для Шувалова](#)

<http://crimerussia.ru/gover/navalnyy-obratitsya-v-fsb-i-sk-s-trebovaniem-proverit-soobshchenie-v-smi-o-gruzovikakh-deneg-dlya-sh/>

Following up on Yashin's report of criminals in United Russia, here is a report focusing on one of them, conveniently translated into English

<http://en.crimerussia.ru/gromkie-dela/election-campaign-of-irina-guseva-challenge-for-criminal-world/?lang=ru>

-----Original Message-----

From: Nellie Ohr (b) (6)

To: (b) (6) Allensworth; (b) (6)

Sent: Mon, Sep 5, 2016 4:45 pm

Subject: Korzhakov speaks

I haven't heard of Korzhakov speaking publicly in ages but he just came forward with an interview.

<http://crimerussia.ru/gover/znayu-ikh-vsekh-govorit-aleksandr-korzhakov/>

Haven't read it through carefully, but it looks as if he doesn't think much of Murov and he talks about being part of the "Rokhlin conspiracy"

P.s. While I'm looking at headlines from crime periodicals, I see that Rovshan Dzhaniyev (Rovshan Lenkoranskiy) was killed in Istanbul on 18 August. He was one suspect in the Usoyan murder.

http://www.primecrime.ru/news/2016-08-23_6209/

Also, there is a fight between Dzhangveladze (another Usoyan murder suspect) and Lasha Shushanashvili to be the patriarch of Russian criminals while Kalashov/Shakro Molodoy is in prison.

http://www.primecrime.ru/news/2016-09-05_6223/

Nellie Ohr

From: Nellie Ohr
Sent: Monday, August 29, 2016 12:30 PM
To: Ohr, Bruce (ODAG)
Subject: Fwd: 2016-#159-Johnson's Russia List

-----Original Message-----

From: David Johnson <davidjohnson@starpower.net>
To: (b) (6) Nellie Email
Sent: Mon, Aug 29, 2016 11:51 am
Subject: 2016-#159-Johnson's Russia List

Having trouble viewing this email? [Click here](#).

Johnson's Russia List

2016-#159

29 August 2016

davidjohnson@starpower.net

A project sponsored through the Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies (IERES) at The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs*

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Washington Post editorial (July 30, 2014): "The West also should not shrink from the destabilization of Mr. Putin's regime."

In this issue

TODAY

1. Newsweek.com: William Courtney and David Shlapak, THE WEST MUST DO FAR MORE TO KEEP PUTIN AT BAY. (The RAND Corporation)
2. Anne Applebaum: "finally - finally! - Russia's extraordinary disinformation campaign is creeping towards the front pages."
3. New York Times: A Powerful Russian Weapon: The Spread of False Stories.
4. New York Times editorial: Russia Blames Others for Its Doping Woes.

5. Consortiumnews.com: Robert Parry, The Dumbed-Down New York Times.
6. Newsweek.com: How Vladimir Putin Is Using Donald Trump to Advance Russia's Goals.
7. Washington Babylon: Ken Silverstein, Donald Trump Vladimir Putin: How the DNC and media created a bogus narrative while ignoring Hillary's deep ties to Russia and Ukraine.
8. Antiwar.com: Justin Raymond, Clinton's Crazy Conspiracy Theory. Is Vladimir Putin behind the #NeverHillary movement?
9. Sputnik: Real Propaganda: NY Times Says Kremlin Uses Sputnik, RT as Disinformation Weapon.
10. www.rt.com: Danielle Ryan, From bad to worse: Clinton laying foundation for increasingly hostile relations with Russia.
11. www.rt.com: 'Divorced from reality: IPC disables Russian Paralympic athletes from excelling in sport.' (interview with Ron Katz)
12. www.rt.com editorial: American defense contractors think you have been brainwashed.
13. Russia Beyond the Headlines/Kommersant: Losing the good fight: IKEA's struggle to remain honest in Russia. The Swedish furniture retailer IKEA is landed with hundreds of lawsuits in Russia every year. It insists that these lawsuits are retaliation for its honesty and determination to do clean business in a country where corruption is part of the system. Yet if investigators are to be believed, even IKEA has been unable to buy land, build its stores on it and connect them to the power grid by
14. The Unz Report: Anatoly Karlin, Is Putin the Godfather of Extreme Nationalism?
15. http://theduran.com: Dmitry Babich, Masha Gessen's unpredictable spelling tea leaves. How name games became Masha Gessen's new way of undertaking Russian political analysis.
16. RFE/RL: Brian Whitmore, Playing The Kremlin's Game.
17. The Unz Review: Anatoly Karlin, Michael Weiss, the Neocon's Neocon.
18. The Unz Review: Richard Silverstein, Michael Weiss and the Iran-U.S. Hardline Nexus That Led Iranian-American to Evin Prison.
19. BBC Monitoring: Russian election debate: War on corruption.
20. www.rt.com: Senator warns of foreign provocation targeting upcoming Russian polls.
21. Vedomosti: Russian paper mulls chances of early presidential election. (Maria Zheleznova)
22. Rethinking Russia: Russia is trying to reestablish its status of global power and the West does not want to let this happen and is trying to retain its dominance. Interview with Vadim Trukhachev, Senior Lecturer, Department of International Relations and Foreign Area Studies, Russian State University for the Humanities.
23. Wall Street Journal: Latvia's Wariness Over Russia Raises Civil Rights Concerns at Home. Petition questioning country's independence results in six-month prison sentence.
24. The American Conservative: Jon Basil Utley, White Russia Makes Progress. A visit to Minsk reveals a peaceful transition to economic freedom.
25. The Unz Review: The Saker, Assessing the Russian Military as an Instrument of Power.
26. Moskovsky Komsomolets: Russia tapes ex-MP scoffs at Ukrainian prosecutor charges. (Konstantin Zatulin article)

27. [Intellinews.com](#): Garham Stack, Sergei Kuznetsov, and Ben Aris, **LONG READ: Poroshenko's empire - the business of being Ukraine's president.**

28. [Government.ru](#): August 2008: Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin interviewed by the German ARD TV channel. "We are not going to play by some special rules of our own. We want everyone to follow the same rules that are also referred to as international law."

#1

[Newsweek.com](#)

August 27, 2016

THE WEST MUST DO FAR MORE TO KEEP PUTIN AT BAY

BY WILLIAM COURTNEY AND DAVID SHLAPAK

William Courtney is an adjunct senior fellow at the nonprofit, nonpartisan Rand Corp. and was U.S. ambassador to Kazakhstan, Georgia and a U.S.-Soviet nuclear testing commission. David Shlapak is a senior defense researcher at RAND.

Last month in Warsaw, Poland, NATO leaders vowed to make the alliance "stronger in defense and deterrence." While progress was made, there is reason to doubt its adequacy.

America continues to decline to provide Ukraine and Georgia with advanced defensive weapons or to challenge Russia's airpower supporting the Syrian regime's siege of Aleppo.

Is the West doing enough to dissuade and deter Russian misbehavior?

In a series of war games, the RAND Corp. examined the shape and probable outcome of a possible Russian invasion of the Baltic States. RAND found that "as currently postured, NATO cannot successfully defend" them. Russian forces would reach the edge of Riga, Latvia, and Tallinn, Estonia, in 60 hours or less.

Gaming also showed that a NATO force of about seven land force brigades (three armored), backed by airpower and other enablers, could avert a rapid overrun and force Moscow to weigh the risks of a prolonged and serious fight.

How is NATO addressing this risk? In Warsaw, NATO leaders opted for a tripwire response short of what RAND's analysis would recommend. Yet, as President Barack Obama correctly noted, it will be NATO's "most significant reinforcement" since the Cold War.

In support of its mission of collective defense, the alliance will deploy four rotating battalion-sized units to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, buttressing their forces. (A brigade has two to five battalions.)

Reinforcing them at a remove, America will add the equivalent of an armored Army brigade to two existing Army brigades in Europe. In addition, equipment for a U.S. Army division will be stored there. These steps send an important signal of commitment but are insufficient to present an adequate conventional deterrent to aggression.

Georgia and Ukraine, not being NATO members, receive less support. America has provided over \$600 million in security assistance to Ukraine since Russia's invasion in 2014. Among its purposes are battalion-level training and the provision of critical non-lethal equipment, such as counter-artillery radars, secure communications and tactical drones.

At a more modest level, Washington is beginning to train Georgian forces in territorial

defense. Both countries seek advanced lethal defensive arms, such as the U.S. Javelin anti-armor missile. To date, Washington declines to supply it.

Some who oppose arming Ukraine say that doing so would only cause Russia to inject more military force. However, there appear to be limits to Moscow's willingness to raise the stakes.

In the summer of 2014, Russia's insertion of conventional forces to shore up rebel allies prevented their defeat, but Moscow eschewed escalating further. President Vladimir Putin stopped talking about "Novorossiia," all of eastern and southern Ukraine.

In recent weeks, however, Russia has again built up forces in and near Ukraine and conducted exercises that it could use as a cover for surprise attack. This again raises the issue of the West's providing additional aid to Kiev to help it deter and defend against aggression.

U.S. aversion to a military role in Syria except against ISIS has kept the West on the sidelines as Russia's airpower helps Assad's forces lay siege to Aleppo. America's restraint also imperils the partial cessation of hostilities in Syria agreed to last February by Russia and America, and robs the West of leverage to promote negotiated outcomes.

By committing only to a light special forces footprint in Syria, the West has far less clout than Russia. U.S. pledges that "attacks on Syria's civilian population are never to be tolerated" have lost meaning.

Perhaps Moscow is already deterred from expanding aggression in Europe and supporting Assad's brutality. Perhaps the Kremlin is heightening military pressure only to strengthen its diplomatic hand. Perhaps Russia will exercise restraint because of its weak economy, isolation from the West and armed forces that are far smaller than NATO's.

Nonetheless, renewed military pressure on Ukraine and stepped up bombing in Syria-also now staged from Iran-suggest that the West may be doing less than it should to dissuade Russia from undermining Western interests.

A key reason is that Russia is more willing to use military power even though it has less of it. Despite the decisions in Warsaw, the West ought to take another look at whether its efforts to deter Russian military interference are sufficient.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#2
Twitter
Anne Applebaum @anneapplebaum

finally-finally! - Russia's extraordinary disinformation campaign is creeping towards the front pages

A Powerful Russian Weapon: The Spread of False Stories
Using both conventional media and covert channels, the Kremlin relies on disinformation to create doubt, fear and discord in Europe and the Unite...
nytimes.com

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#3

New York Times

August 29, 2016

A Powerful Russian Weapon: The Spread of False Stories

By NEIL MacFARQUHAR

Dark Arts: Russia's Stealth Conflict

This article is the second in a series on how Russia covertly projects power.

STOCKHOLM - With a vigorous national debate underway on whether Sweden should enter a military partnership with NATO, officials in Stockholm suddenly encountered an unsettling problem: a flood of distorted and outright false information on social media, confusing public perceptions of the issue.

The claims were alarming: If Sweden, a non-NATO member, signed the deal, the alliance would stockpile secret nuclear weapons on Swedish soil; NATO could attack Russia from Sweden without government approval; NATO soldiers, immune from prosecution, could rape Swedish women without fear of criminal charges.

They were all false, but the disinformation had begun spilling into the traditional news media, and as the defense minister, Peter Hultqvist, traveled the country to promote the pact in speeches and town hall meetings, he was repeatedly grilled about the bogus stories.

"People were not used to it, and they got scared, asking what can be believed, what should be believed?" said Marinette Nyh Radebo, Mr. Hultqvist's spokeswoman.

As often happens in such cases, Swedish officials were never able to pin down the source of the false reports. But they, numerous analysts and experts in American and European intelligence point to Russia as the prime suspect, noting that preventing NATO expansion is a centerpiece of the foreign policy of President Vladimir V. Putin, who invaded Georgia in 2008 largely to forestall that possibility.

In Crimea, eastern Ukraine and now Syria, Mr. Putin has flaunted a modernized and more muscular military. But he lacks the economic strength and overall might to openly confront NATO, the European Union or the United States. Instead, he has invested heavily in a program of "weaponized" information, using a variety of means to sow doubt and division. The goal is to weaken cohesion among member states, stir discord in their domestic politics and blunt opposition to Russia.

"Moscow views world affairs as a system of special operations, and very sincerely believes that it itself is an object of Western special operations," said Gleb Pavlovsky, who helped establish the Kremlin's information machine before 2008. "I am sure that there are a lot of centers, some linked to the state, that are involved in inventing these kinds of fake stories."

The planting of false stories is nothing new; the Soviet Union devoted considerable resources to that during the ideological battles of the Cold War. Now, though, disinformation is regarded as an important aspect of Russian military doctrine, and it is being directed at political debates in target countries with far greater sophistication and volume than in the past.

The flow of misleading and inaccurate stories is so strong that both NATO and the European Union have established special offices to identify and refute disinformation, particularly claims emanating from Russia.

The Kremlin's clandestine methods have surfaced in the United States, too, American officials say, identifying Russian intelligence as the likely source of leaked Democratic

officials say, identifying Russian intelligence as the likely source of leaked Democratic National Committee emails that embarrassed Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign.

The Kremlin uses both conventional media - Sputnik, a news agency, and RT, a television outlet - and covert channels, as in Sweden, that are almost always untraceable.

Russia exploits both approaches in a comprehensive assault, Wilhelm Unge, a spokesman for the Swedish Security Service, said this year when presenting the agency's annual report. "We mean everything from internet trolls to propaganda and misinformation spread by media companies like RT and Sputnik," he said.

The fundamental purpose of dezinformatsiya, or Russian disinformation, experts said, is to undermine the official version of events - even the very idea that there is a true version of events - and foster a kind of policy paralysis.

Disinformation most famously succeeded in early 2014 with the initial obfuscation about deploying Russian forces to seize Crimea. That summer, Russia pumped out a dizzying array of theories about the destruction of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over Ukraine, blaming the C.I.A. and, most outlandishly, Ukrainian fighter pilots who had mistaken the airliner for the Russian presidential aircraft.

The cloud of stories helped veil the simple truth that poorly trained insurgents had accidentally downed the plane with a missile supplied by Russia.

Moscow adamantly denies using disinformation to influence Western public opinion and tends to label accusations of either overt or covert threats as "Russophobia."

"There is an impression that, like in a good orchestra, many Western countries every day accuse Russia of threatening someone," Maria Zakharova, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, said at a recent ministry briefing.

Tracing individual strands of disinformation is difficult, but in Sweden and elsewhere, experts have detected a characteristic pattern that they tie to Kremlin-generated disinformation campaigns.

"The dynamic is always the same: It originates somewhere in Russia, on Russia state media sites, or different websites or somewhere in that kind of context," said Anders Lindberg, a Swedish journalist and lawyer.

"Then the fake document becomes the source of a news story distributed on far-left or far-right-wing websites," he said. "Those who rely on those sites for news link to the story, and it spreads. Nobody can say where they come from, but they end up as key issues in a security policy decision."

Although the topics may vary, the goal is the same, Mr. Lindberg and others suggested. "What the Russians are doing is building narratives; they are not building facts," he said. "The underlying narrative is, 'Don't trust anyone.'"

The weaponization of information is not some project devised by a Kremlin policy expert but is an integral part of Russian military doctrine - what some senior military figures call a "decisive" battlefield.

"The role of nonmilitary means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness," Gen. Valery V. Gerasimov, the chief of the general staff of the Russian Armed Forces, wrote in 2013.

A prime Kremlin target is Europe, where the rise of the populist right and declining support for the European Union create an ever more receptive audience for Russia's conservative, nationalistic and authoritarian approach under Mr. Putin. Last year, the European Parliament accused Russia of "financing radical and extremist parties" in its member states, and in 2014 the Kremlin extended an \$11.7 million loan to the National Front, the extreme-right party in France.

"The Russians are very good at courting everyone who has a grudge with liberal democracy, and that goes from extreme right to extreme left," said Patrik Oksanen, an editorial writer for the Swedish newspaper group MittMedia. The central idea, he said, is that "liberal democracy is corrupt, inefficient, chaotic and, ultimately, not democratic."

Another message, largely unstated, is that European governments lack the competence to deal with the crises they face, particularly immigration and terrorism, and that their officials are all American puppets.

In Germany, concerns over immigrant violence grew after a 13-year-old Russian-German girl said she had been raped by migrants. A report on Russian state television furthered the story. Even after the police debunked the claim, Russia's foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, continued to chastise Germany.

In Britain, analysts said, the Kremlin's English-language news outlets heavily favored the campaign for the country to leave the European Union, despite their claims of objectivity.

In the Czech Republic, alarming, sensational stories portraying the United States, the European Union and immigrants as villains appear daily across a cluster of about 40 pro-Russia websites.

During NATO military exercises in early June, articles on the websites suggested that Washington controlled Europe through the alliance, with Germany as its local sheriff. Echoing the disinformation that appeared in Sweden, the reports said NATO planned to store nuclear weapons in Eastern Europe and would attack Russia from there without seeking approval from local capitals.

A poll this summer by European Values, a think tank in Prague, found that 51 percent of Czechs viewed the United States' role in Europe negatively, that only 32 percent viewed the European Union positively and that at least a quarter believed some elements of the disinformation.

"The data show how public opinion is changing thanks to the disinformation on those outlets," said Jakub Janda, the think tank's deputy director for public and political affairs. "They try to look like a regular media outlet even if they have a hidden agenda."

Not all Russian disinformation efforts succeed. Sputnik news websites in various Scandinavian languages failed to attract enough readers and were closed after less than a year.

Both RT and Sputnik portray themselves as independent, alternative voices. Sputnik claims that it "tells the untold," even if its daily report relies heavily on articles abridged from other sources. RT trumpets the slogan "Question More."

Both depict the West as grim, divided, brutal, decadent, overrun with violent immigrants and unstable. "They want to give a picture of Europe as some sort of continent that is collapsing," Mr. Hultqvist, the Swedish defense minister, said in an interview.

RT often seems obsessed with the United States, portraying life there as hellish. Its coverage of the Democratic National Convention, for example, skipped the speeches and

coverage of the Democratic National Convention, for example, skipped the speeches and focused instead on scattered demonstrations. It defends the Republican presidential nominee, Donald J. Trump, as an underdog maligned by the established news media.

Margarita Simonyan, RT's editor in chief, said the channel was being singled out as a threat because it offered a different narrative from "the Anglo-American media-political establishment." RT, she said, wants to provide "a perspective otherwise missing from the mainstream media echo chamber."

Moscow's targeting of the West with disinformation dates to a Cold War program the Soviets called "active measures." The effort involved leaking or even writing stories for sympathetic newspapers in India and hoping that they would be picked up in the West, said Professor Mark N. Kramer, a Cold War expert at Harvard.

The story that AIDS was a C.I.A. project run amok spread that way, and it poisons the discussion of the disease decades later. At the time, before the Soviet Union's 1991 collapse, the Kremlin was selling communism as an ideological alternative. Now, experts said, the ideological component has evaporated, but the goal of weakening adversaries remains.

In Sweden recently, that has meant a series of bizarre forged letters and news articles about NATO and linked to Russia.

One forgery, on Defense Ministry letterhead over Mr. Hultqvist's signature, encouraged a major Swedish firm to sell artillery to Ukraine, a move that would be illegal in Sweden. Ms. Nyh Radebo, his spokeswoman, put an end to that story in Sweden, but at international conferences, Mr. Hultqvist still faced questions about the nonexistent sales.

Russia also made at least one overt attempt to influence the debate. During a seminar in the spring, Vladimir Kozin, a senior adviser to the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, a think tank linked to the Kremlin and Russian foreign intelligence, argued against any change in Sweden's neutral status.

"Do they really need to lose their neutral status?" he said of the Swedes. "To permit fielding new U.S. military bases on their territory and to send their national troops to take part in dubious regional conflicts?"

Whatever the method or message, Russia clearly wants to win any information war, as Dmitry Kiselyev, Russia's most famous television anchor and the director of the organization that runs Sputnik, made clear recently.

Speaking this summer on the 75th anniversary of the Soviet Information Bureau, Mr. Kiselyev said the age of neutral journalism was over. "If we do propaganda, then you do propaganda, too," he said, directing his message to Western journalists.

"Today, it is much more costly to kill one enemy soldier than during World War II, World War I or in the Middle Ages," he said in an interview on the state-run Rossiya 24 network. While the business of "persuasion" is more expensive now, too, he said, "if you can persuade a person, you don't need to kill him."

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#4
New York Times
August 29, 2016
Editorial

Russia Blames Others for Its Doping Woes

The recent obituary of Nina Ponomareva, a discus thrower who in 1952 became the first Soviet athlete to win an Olympic gold medal, recounts how she later made a foolish mistake. On a trip to London, she was caught shoplifting some hats. To the authorities in Moscow, however, the mistake was not hers. It was all a British "dirty provocation."

That became the standard prism through which the Soviets viewed any punitive action against them: politically motivated, always a provocation, never justified. And even though the Cold War is long over, President Vladimir Putin remains stuck in the same, snarling defensive crouch in his responses to any accusations of Russian foul play, from the seizure of Crimea to the widespread state-sponsored doping of Russian athletes.

Yet Russia's reaction to being banned from the Paralympic Games seems particularly outrageous. The Russian team was banned because Mr. Putin's greed for medals, in the illusion that they cover his authoritarian rule with glory, has led to the systematic doping of athletes, including those for whom competition represents a triumph over physical disabilities.

Announcing the ban earlier this month, Sir Philip Craven, president of the International Paralympic Committee and himself a former wheelchair basketball player, was scathing: Russia's "medals over morals mentality disgusts me."

Far from taking such rebukes to heart, Mr. Putin's government has begun a loud campaign to depict itself as the aggrieved party, feeding a furious anti-American and anti-Western frenzy in the Russian media and public. Turning the accusations on their head, Mr. Putin on Thursday declared it was "just cynical to take it out on people for whom sport has become the meaning of life."

It is hard to say how much of this Mr. Putin believes. But the degree to which the narrative of victimization has taken hold in Russia is worrying. For instance, Dr. Grigory Rodchenkov, the former director of Russia's antidoping laboratory who provided evidence of the doping and is now in the United States, is reviled in the Russian media as a traitorous liar, and some Russian officials have gone so far as to assert that it was the World Anti-Doping Agency that ordered him to tamper with athletes' urine samples.

Having brought Russia's doping practices to light, the International Olympic Committee, the International Paralympic Committee and the World Anti-Doping Agency should counter Mr. Putin's lies by making as clear as they can that Russia's athletes, and especially its disabled athletes, have been betrayed by their government, and their government alone.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#5

Consortiumnews.com

August 27, 2016

The Dumbed-Down New York Times

By Robert Parry

Exclusive: A New York Times columnist writes Americans are so "dumbed-down" that they don't know that Russia "invaded" Ukraine two years ago, but that "invasion" was mostly in the minds of Times editors and other propagandists, says Robert Parry.

In a column mocking the political ignorance of the "dumbed-down" American people and lamenting the death of "objective fact," New York Times columnist Timothy Egan shows why so many Americans have lost faith in the supposedly just-the-facts-ma'am

mainstream media.

Egan states as flat fact, "If more than 16 percent of Americans could locate Ukraine on a map, it would have been a Really Big Deal when Trump said that Russia was not going to invade it - two years after they had, in fact, invaded it."

But it is not a "fact" that Russia "invaded" Ukraine - and it's especially not the case if you also don't state as flat fact that the United States has invaded Syria, Libya and many other countries where the U.S. government has launched bombing raids or dispatched "special forces." Yet, the Times doesn't describe those military operations as "invasions."

Nor does the newspaper of record condemn the U.S. government for violating international law, although in every instance in which U.S. forces cross into another country's sovereign territory without permission from that government or the United Nations Security Council, that is technically an act of illegal aggression.

In other words, the Times applies a conscious double standard when reporting on the actions of the United States or one of its allies (note how Turkey's recent invasion of Syria was just an "intervention") as compared to how the Times deals with actions by U.S. adversaries, such as Russia.

Biased on Ukraine

The Times' reporting on Ukraine has been particularly dishonest and hypocritical. The Times ignores the substantial evidence that the U.S. government encouraged and supported a violent coup that overthrew elected President Viktor Yanukovich on Feb. 22, 2014, including a pre-coup intercepted phone call between Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt discussing who should lead the new government and how to "midwife this thing."

The Times also played down the key role of neo-Nazis and extreme nationalists in killing police before the coup, seizing government building during the coup, and then spearheading the slaughter of ethnic Russian Ukrainians after the coup. If you wanted to detect the role of these SS-wannabes from the Times' coverage, you'd have to scour the last few paragraphs of a few stories that dealt with other aspects of the Ukraine crisis. While leaving out the context, the Times has repeatedly claimed that Russia "invaded" Crimea, although curiously without showing any photographs of an amphibious landing on Crimea's coast or Russian tanks crashing across Ukraine's border en route to Crimea or troops parachuting from the sky to seize strategic Crimean targets.

The reason such evidence of an "invasion" was lacking is that Russian troops were already stationed in Crimea as part of a basing agreement for the port of Sevastopol. So, it was a very curious "invasion" indeed, since the Russian troops were on scene before the "invasion" and their involvement after the coup was peaceful in protecting the Crimean population from the depredations of the new regime's neo-Nazis. The presence of a small number of Russian troops also allowed the Crimeans to vote on whether to secede from Ukraine and rejoin Russia, which they did with a 96 percent majority.

In the eastern provinces, which represented Yanukovich's political base and where many Ukrainians opposed the coup, you can fault, if you wish, the Russian decision to provide some military equipment and possibly some special forces so ethnic Russian and other anti-coup Ukrainians could defend themselves from the assaults by the neo-Nazi Azov brigade and from the tanks and artillery of the coup-controlled Ukrainian army.

But an honest newspaper and honest columnists would insist on including this context. They also would resist pejorative phrases such as "invasion" and "aggression" - unless, of course, they applied the same terminology objectively to actions by the U.S. government

course, they applied the same terminology objectively to actions by the U.S. government and its "allies."

That sort of nuance and balance is not what you get from The New York Times and its "group thinking" writers, people like Timothy Egan. When it comes to reporting on Russia, it's Cold War-style propaganda, day in and day out.

And this has not been a one-off problem. The unrelenting bias of the Times and, indeed, the rest of the mainstream U.S. news media on the Ukraine crisis represents a lack of professionalism that was also apparent in the pro-war coverage of the Iraq crisis in 2002-03 and other catastrophic U.S. foreign policy decisions.

A growing public recognition of that mainstream bias explains why so much of the American population has tuned out supposedly "objective" news (because it is anything but objective).

Indeed, those Americans who are more sophisticated about Russia and Ukraine than Timothy Egan know that they're not getting the straight story from the Times and other MSM outlets. Those not-dumbed-down Americans can spot U.S. government propaganda when they see it.

[For more on this topic, see Consortiumnews.com's "NYT Still Pretends No Coup in Ukraine"; "NYT Is Lost in its Ukraine Propaganda"; "NYT Whites Out Ukraine's Brown Shirts"; and "NYT Enforces Ukraine 'Group Think'"]

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#6

Newsweek.com

August 29, 2016

How Vladimir Putin Is Using Donald Trump to Advance Russia's Goals

BY OWEN MATTHEWS

Not since the beginning of the Cold War has a U.S. politician been as fervently pro-Russian as Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump. Just four years after his predecessor Mitt Romney declared Russia to be Washington's greatest geopolitical threat, Trump has praised President Vladimir Putin as a real leader, "unlike what we have in this country." Trump has also dismissed reports that Putin has murdered political enemies ("Our country does plenty of killing also," he told MSNBC), suggested that he would "look into" recognizing Russia's annexation of the Crimean peninsula and questioned whether the United States should defend NATO allies who don't pay their way. When Russian hackers stole a cache of emails in July from the Democratic National Committee's servers, as security analysts have shown, Trump called on "Russia, if you're listening," to hack some more.

"Trump is breaking with Republican foreign doctrine and almost every Republican foreign thinker I know," says Michael McFaul, U.S. ambassador to Russia from 2012 to 2014. "He is departing radically from Ronald Reagan, something never done by any Republican Party presidential candidate."

It's easy to see why Putin views Trump's ascendancy as a godsend-and why he mobilized his cyberspies and media assets to his aid, according to security analysts. "Trump advocates isolationist policies and an abdication of U.S. leadership in the world. He cares little about promoting democracy and human rights," continues McFaul. "A U.S. retreat from global affairs fits precisely with Putin's international interests." Putin has been relatively reserved in his public support for Trump-calling him "colorful and talented," which in Russian comes across as faint praise-but Kremlin-sponsored propaganda outlets like

in Russian comes across as faint praise—but Kremlin-sponsored propaganda outlets like Sputnik and RT (formerly Russia Today) have lavishly praised Trump, tweeted #CrookedHillary memes and supported Trump's assertion that Barack Obama "founded ISIS," and Russia's world-class army of state-sponsored hackers has targeted Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party.

What's more, it's increasingly clear that after the DNC hack the Kremlin is relishing, even quietly flaunting, its newfound role as a meddler in U.S. politics. After years of U.S. influence over Russian affairs, especially in the chaotic 1990s, it is sweet revenge for the Kremlin to be cast once again as global puppet master. And most fundamentally, the Kremlin's support for Trump is part of a longstanding strategy to sow disruption and discord in the West. Whether it's by backing French ultra-nationalists, Catalan separatists or the Brexit campaign, or boosting Donald Trump's chances by blackening the Democrats, the Kremlin believes Russia benefits every time the Western establishment is embarrassed.

Russia's brazen cyberattack on the DNC servers was "a cyber psy-op," according to Brian Whitmore of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. "At least one of Moscow's goals is apparently to force the United States to treat it as an equal superpower," Whitmore wrote in the influential Power Vertical blog. "Suddenly, for the first time since the Cold War, Russia occupies center stage in a U.S. election. Suddenly, there are global headlines about the threat of Russian hackers."

The forensics of the DNC hack point to two things—first, that two well-known Russian hacker groups with connections to that country's intelligence services were responsible for the break-in, and second, that when the material was released through WikiLeaks, the Russians made little effort to disguise their hand in the heist. A detailed report in July by the hacker-watcher collective CrowdStrike stated that one group, Fancy Bear (or APT 28), gained access to the DNC database in April. The other, Cozy Bear (or APT 29), broke in as early as June 2015. According to Alexander Klimburg, a cybersecurity expert at the Hague Center for Strategic Studies and author of the forthcoming book *Dark Web*, APT 28 is associated with Russia's GRU military intelligence and APT 29 with its Federal Security Service, or FSB. "Our team considers them some of the best adversaries out of all the numerous nation-state, criminal and hacktivist/terrorist groups we encounter on a daily basis," blogged CrowdStrike's chief technology officer, Dmitri Alperovitch. "Their tradecraft is superb, operational security second to none."

Last year, APT 28 hacked the State Department, the White House and the civilian email of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was also involved in hacks of French TV and the 2014 meltdown of a German steel foundry after malware infected its systems, an attack known in cyberwar circles by the chilling clinical term "cyber-to-physical effect." The DNC hack, then, was just one of several "very forward-leaning attempts to signal to the West Russia's cyber capabilities," says Klimburg. "They often don't care about being discovered. Indicating that you are behind something is part of the operation."

When CrowdStrike first fingered the Russians, an internet user calling himself Guccifer 2.0 claimed that he, not the Russian government, was the culprit. Guccifer attempted to signal his non-Russianness by using an ordinary French Hotmail account—the cyber equivalent of disguising yourself in a Groucho Marx false nose—but the metadata on the documents he provided were found to contain Russian signatures, including "Felix Edmundovich," the first names of Soviet secret police founder Felix Dzerzhinsky.

Foreign intelligence agencies have been found snooping on American political campaigns before. In 2014, Chinese hackers broke into Romney's servers, for instance. But the DNC hack has elevated such interference in politics to a frightening extent. "I just want to underscore how unprecedented this is—using espionage to influence an American presidential election crossed a new level of intervention," says McFaul.

Don't Bad-Mouth the Boss

What's in Project Trump for Putin is clear. But the more puzzling question is how Trump became Putin's man in Washington. Former CIA Director Mike Morell wrote in The New York Times that Putin "recruited Mr. Trump as an unwitting agent of the Russian Federation" with flattery. But the truth is more nuanced. Trump's pro-Putinism goes back to at least 2007, when he told CNN that the Russian strongman was doing "a great job" rebuilding Russia. Trump was pushing real estate deals in Moscow at the time and, according to one Moscow-based American businessman who negotiated with him, Trump's admiration for Putin was rooted in "pure self-interest.... He was looking to make friends and business partners" among Russia's politically connected elite. "Oligarchs aren't going to do business with anyone who bad-mouths the boss," explains the real estate developer, who requested anonymity because of his ongoing Russian investments.

Trump's affinity for the Kremlin deepened after he launched his political career in 2014. Trump has surrounded himself with advisers with deep connections to the Putin regime. Trump's chief foreign policy adviser, Carter Page, once ran the Moscow office of Merrill Lynch and advised the Russian energy giant Gazprom (in which he still owns shares, Page said in March). **Page's company, Global Energy Capital, continues to work with Russian investments-and Sergey Yatsenko, Gazprom's former deputy chief financial officer, works for GEC as an adviser.** Since both companies have suffered grievously from the sanctions the U.S. and EU imposed against Russia over its annexation of Crimea, Page is a passionate advocate of lifting them-something Trump has said he will consider.

On July 7, Page took time off from the Trump campaign to give a speech at Moscow's New Economic School, where he slammed America's "often hypocritical focus on democratization" and praised Russia's policy of "noninterference" and "respect" for its neighbors. "Page toed the [Kremlin] party line," says one senior Moscow expatriate professional who attended Page's talk. "He's a believer.... It's common among Western businesspeople in Russia to be pro-Putin. But it's rare to hear it from someone at the top of Republican politics."

Lieutenant General Michael Flynn, a Trump adviser and former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, is a regular guest on RT, the Kremlin's conspiracy-theory-minded English-language propaganda channel. He has refused to say if he's on RT's payroll, but last year Flynn flew to Moscow to attend the station's 10th anniversary gala, where he sat two chairs away from Putin. Michael Caputo, a public relations adviser who helped run Trump's New York primary campaign, lived in Russia in the 1990s, and Gazprom's media arm contracted him to improve Putin's image in the United States. Richard Burt, a former U.S. ambassador to Germany during the 1980s who is known for his strong skepticism of the U.S.'s commitment to its NATO allies (Burt appeared in a panel discussion in April on the topic "Does America Need Allies?"), reportedly helped draft at least one Trump speech where the candidate blasted NATO's "free rider problem," according to Politico.

Burt is chairman of the advisory council of The National Interest, a publication of the Center for the National Interest, a strongly pro-Russian think tank based in Washington. The CNI has long partnered with the Kremlin-backed Institute for Democracy and Cooperation, a think tank in New York devoted to promoting Moscow's interests. In May 2014, the two institutions held a joint press conference defending Russia's position in Ukraine. In April, Trump chose the CNI as the venue for his first major foreign policy speech, and the audience included Russian Ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Kislyak.

Trump's former campaign manager Paul Manafort has longstanding ties to Ukraine's Kremlin-backed former President Viktor Yanukovich, advising on campaigning for his

Party of Regions in the 2006 parliamentary elections and paving the way for Yanukovich's ascent to prime minister and then the presidency, from which he was ousted in 2014 amid massive pro-EU protests. Ukrainian parliamentarian Serhiy Leshchenko wrote in *The Guardian* that he had seen "so-called 'shadow accounting' documents" that show "a total of \$12.7m of payments made to Manafort" by the Party of the Regions, at least \$2.2 million of which, according to the AP, was channeled to two prominent Washington lobbying firms in 2012. Manafort denies any wrongdoing, though the very public discussion of his Ukrainian business connections certainly played a part in his being sidelined as Trump's campaign manager in mid-August.

During his time at the helm of the Trump campaign, Manafort played a crucial role in hauling the Republican Party's official position away from its traditionally anti-Russian stance. According to *The Washington Post*, Trump campaign staffers gutted a proposed amendment to the Republican Party platform that called for the U.S. to provide "lethal defensive weapons" for Ukraine to defend itself against Russian aggression, defying a strong GOP consensus on the issue.

Trump has business ties in Russia that go back to 1987, when he and his then-wife, Ivana, visited Moscow to scope out a luxury hotel joint venture with the USSR's state tourism agency Intourist, according to his memoir *The Art of the Deal*. That deal came to nothing, but Trump returned in 1996 to negotiate a high-end condominium project with U.S. tobacco giant Liggett-Ducat. Trump "talked a big game," recalls the American real estate developer, who has direct knowledge of the negotiations. "But what was needed was not New York real estate connections but Moscow political connections.... Trump didn't have those." In 2005, Trump took another crack at a now-booming Russia, hoping to build a Trump Tower on the site of a former pencil factory. He partnered with Bayrock Group, a New York-based developer that had co-developed the Trump SoHo and Trump International Hotel and Tower in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to pull together financing. Bayrock's CEO was Tefvik Arif, a Kazakhstan-born former deputy head of the Soviet Ministry of Commerce's hotel department, who had made money running high-end tourist hotels in Turkey. The deal failed-in part because of Arif's choice of Soviet-born Felix Sater (later Satter) to run Bayrock's Moscow operation. Sater had served prison time for slashing a man's face in a 1991 Manhattan brawl-"He got into trouble because he got into a barroom fight which a lot of people do," Trump once said in a court deposition-and in 1998 was convicted for fraud over associations with White Rock Partners, a Mafia-connected New York stock brokerage. (Arif was detained in Turkey in October 2010 on suspicion of organizing sex parties for wealthy businessmen and Eastern European models aboard a \$60 million yacht once used by the nation's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, according to charges filed by prosecutor Yusuf Hakki Dogan. Arif was cleared of all charges the following year.)

After the Bayrock debacle, Trump had better luck selling high-end real estate to wealthy Russians in the West. "Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of a lot of our assets," Donald Trump Jr. told a real estate conference in 2008. "We see a lot of money pouring in from Russia." Among those deals was the sale of a mansion in Palm Beach, Florida, to Russian fertilizer billionaire Dmitry Rybolovlev for \$95 million in 2008, according to Florida property records. In the wake of several bankruptcies, Trump found it hard to raise money in the West, so he gathered money from Russian and Kazakh investors for his Trump SoHo and three other Bayrock projects. Salvatore Lauria, a partner of Sater's in White Rock Partners, helped gather \$50 million in investments for Trump SoHo that included, according to a lawsuit against Bayrock, "unexplained infusions of cash from accounts in Kazakhstan and Russia."

Trump's latest set of Russian partners are the most high-rolling-Aras Agalarov and Emin Agalarov, real estate developers born in Baku, Azerbaijan, who paid Trump to organize the 2013 Miss Universe competition in Moscow. They also signed a deal to build a Trump Tower in the Russian capital, though the building has not yet got off the ground. The Agalarovs have received several contracts for state-funded construction projects, and

Putin personally awarded Aras Agalarov the Order of Honor of the Russian Federation soon after the Miss Universe pageant. Trump told a National Press Club lunch in Washington in 2014 that during his trip to Moscow the previous year he had spoken "indirectly and directly" with Putin, "who could not have been nicer." In fact, Putin never showed up at the gala, and the two have never met.

But even the Agalarovs are far from Russia's big leagues of power and money. "It's bizarre that people are talking about Trump's Russian business interests, because he never made it in Russia," says the Moscow-based American real estate developer. "He tried to become a player, but he didn't know the right people."

Despite Trump's lack of significant business success in Russia, his political career has made him an important part of Putin's wider strategy to weaken the West and court conservatives around the world into a grand anti-liberal alliance headed by Russia. In August, Moscow hosted a gathering of nationalist and separatist activists from all over Europe and the U.S.-part of an ongoing effort to encourage anti-EU and anti-NATO political groups, including Greece's Golden Dawn, Bulgaria's Ataka and Hungary's Jobbik. As Vice President Joe Biden warned in a speech in Washington last year, "Putin sees such political forces as useful tools to be manipulated, to create cracks in the European body politic which he can then exploit."

To Putin's mind, the campaign is a way of pushing back against what he sees as meddling by Washington and Brussels in his backyard, from allegedly encouraging anti-Putin protests in Moscow in 2011 to fomenting the pro-European Maidan uprising in Kiev in 2013 that led to the ousting of President Yanukovich (and put Paul Manafort temporarily out of a job). Putin "honestly believes that the U.S. is trying to overthrow him," says Kremlin-connected political technologist Gleb Pavlovsky, who advised Putin until 2011.

"In the eyes of Russian elites, Western aggression must be met with a response," argues Eugene Rumer, director of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Russia and Eurasia Program and a former national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the U.S. National Intelligence Council. "Hacking into DNC computers...is simply payback for Western media reports about elite corruption in Russia. It helps boost the Russian narrative that money and politics go hand in hand everywhere, and that Russia is no different from the United States or other Western countries whose governments are critical of Russia."

The Billionaire Stooge

Temperamentally, Putin and Trump don't have much in common. Putin is a steely, shy, highly controlled career KGB man who has spent his life in disciplined institutions and got his break not through public politics but by being a perfect courtier to Boris Yeltsin. The other is a freewheeling dealmaker with a taste for the trappings of wealth, beautiful women, publicity of any sort and a deep need for the acclaim of crowds. But both are brilliant opportunist tacticians with a cynical attitude about the truth, willing to cherry-pick facts to build narratives that suit their purpose. Trump more closely resembles Russian or Ukrainian oligarchs-though he is much poorer than most of them-insofar as he has hijacked a political movement to fuel his personal ambition and boost his business interests.

The Kremlin's support of Trump-offered in the form of backing from propaganda channels like RT and Sputnik-is electorally insignificant. Even the covert revelations of the DNC hack didn't make much of a dent in Clinton's ratings (though WikiLeaks founder and RT contributor Julian Assange promises devastating new findings in October). What's truly disturbing is the cyberwar methods used by the Kremlin to disrupt the election-and the wider and more sinister political program that the Kremlin is pursuing.

"The target of the hacks wasn't just Clinton," Eerik-Niiles Kross, the former head of Estonian intelligence, wrote in a recent essay in Politico. "Nor is Moscow much interested in supporting Trump (willing useful idiot though he may be). What the Russians have in their sights is nothing less than the democratic fabric of American society and the integrity of the system of Western liberal values.... The political warfare of the Cold War is back-in updated form, with meaner, more modern tools, including a vast state media empire in Western languages, hackers, spies, agents, useful idiots, compatriot groups, and hordes of internet trolls."

In other words, Trump is merely a useful stooge in the Kremlin's grand design to encourage NATO disunity, U.S. isolationism and the breakup of Europe. In practice, all the effort of Russian-sponsored hackers, think tankers and propaganda channels is unlikely to have much real effect and on balance have probably harmed Trump's chances of getting into the White House. But the effort is real. As Kross put it, "Russia is effectively using our democracies and our systems of rule of law against us.... America, welcome to the war."

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#7

Washington Babylon

<http://washingtonbabylon.com>

August 24, 2016

Donald Trump ? Vladimir Putin: How the DNC and media created a bogus narrative while ignoring Hillary's deep ties to Russia and Ukraine

By Ken Silverstein

[Text with links here <http://washingtonbabylon.com/donald-trump-%F0%9F%92%98-vladimir-putin-how-the-dnc-and-media-created-a-bogus-narrative-while-ignoring-hillarys-deep-ties-to-russia-and-ukraine/>]

Part 1: Did Russia really hack the DNC? Meet Cyberclown James Lewis

One of the leading stories of the presidential campaign is that Donald Trump is in bed with Vladimir Putin and that if elected president he and Russia's leader will effectively be partners in international crime. Trump has said things about Putin that have fueled this narrative, but it's rather curious, given that he and Putin are allegedly thick as thieves, that Trump has been so unsuccessful at getting approval for any of his fervently pursued business ventures in Russia.

One of the key subplots of the media narrative is that "Russia hacked the DNC," a story line for which there is no definitive evidence and which has been furiously promoted by Hillary's campaign. That has been hugely useful for Hillary because it not only has convinced many voters that Trump and Putin are joined at the hip, but it's obscured the most important thing we have learned from the hack: Whoever did it, the documents reveal that the Democratic Party is controlled by a corrupt cabal of amoral insiders who will do anything and say anything to win the election for Hillary.

One of the key people pushing the Russia hack angle is Superhack James Lewis of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, whose think tank is funded by a lot of companies with interests in the blossoming "cyberterrorism" industry and who has been vigorously pushing that "THREAT" for a long time. David Sanger of the New York Times has been an especially useful idiot when it comes to pushing out Lewis's ideas.

In a recent post, CSIS Cyberclown Lewis (formal title: Senior Vice President and Director, Strategic Technologies Program) refers to a number of U.S. "opponents in cyberspace," citing the Russkies as well as alleged Iranian breaches of major U.S. banks and "intrusion into critical infrastructure networks" as well as "Chinese cyber commercial espionage." He

into critical infrastructure networks as well as Chinese cyber commercial espionage. He says that more must be done - translate: funnel additional cash to Lewis's beloved cyberterror contractors - to protect the United States from this terrifying menace.

In any of this storyline true? Possibly, but it's hard to know because Lewis relentlessly promotes his ideas while offering little hard evidence, beyond official sources, to prove it. He suggests that the alleged Russian hack of the DNC more or less shows that America will soon be a vassal state of Russia, writing, that the hacks "do not threaten the United States' territorial integrity, but they do threaten its political independence. They are part of a larger Russian effort to shape politics in the West to advance Russian foreign policy goals and damage the United States."

(It goes without saying, in the official narrative, that the U.S. government never, ever spies on foreign governments or seeks to protect its national interests. We just seek to spread democracy and try to alleviate global poverty and conflict, and we do it because we're unlike every other empire in history. We're benevolent good guys motivated strictly by altruism. Oops, I forgot, we're not an empire, we're just the world's leading force of all things nice and sweet.)

In the latest twist in the Russian cyberterror narrative, as James Bamford recently wrote at Reuters, the "hacking tools themselves, likely stolen from the National Security Agency, are on the digital auction block. Once again, the usual suspects [in the media] start with Russia." But Bamford, who is the country's leading expert on the Agency, said the evidence in fact "points to another Snowden at the NSA."

He wrote: "If Russia had stolen the hacking tools, it would be senseless to publicize the theft, let alone put them up for sale. It would be like a safecracker stealing the combination to a bank vault and putting it on Facebook. Once revealed, companies and governments would patch their firewalls, just as the bank would change its combination.

A more logical explanation could also be insider theft. If that's the case, it's one more reason to question the usefulness of an agency that secretly collects private information on millions of Americans but can't keep its most valuable data from being stolen, or as it appears in this case, being used against us."

Check out Bamford's column and make sure to note his reference to Lewis. And thanks to William Blunden for bringing much of this to my attention.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#8

Antiwar.com

August 29, 2016

Clinton's Crazy Conspiracy Theory

Is Vladimir Putin behind the #NeverHillary movement?

By Justin Raimondo

Justin Raimondo is the editorial director of Antiwar.com, and a senior fellow at the Randolph Bourne Institute. He is a contributing editor at The American Conservative, and writes a monthly column for Chronicles

Hillary Clinton's recent "alt right" speech marks a new and dangerous low in what has become race to the bottom - and, should she be elected, it has ominous foreign policy implications as well.

Alarmed that Trump is reaching out to the African-American community, Mrs. Clinton tried to make the case that the GOP candidate is a apologist for such groups as the Ku Klux Klan (do they still exist?) and an obscure amalgam she dubbed the "alt right." As she

named this latter group, there was a significant silence, a pause in the cheering: perhaps her audience thought she was having a senior moment of the intestinal variety.

In any case, none of this is anything new: it's a variation on the "Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy" theme that she has been dragging out ever since the 1990s. There is, however, a new dimension to this tired boilerplate, now that she's running for President: the Vast Right-wing Conspiracy is being portrayed as an international cabal with its headquarters in the Kremlin.

As her peroration on the "racist" sins of Trump reached a climax, she hauled out Nigel Farage, the former leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), who was instrumental in leading the Brexit campaign to victory. Farage - who is, in her view, a "racist," a "sexist," and god knows what other unsavory "ists" - "has appeared regularly on Russian propaganda programs," she yelled "Now he's standing on the same stage as the Republican nominee."

What is she talking about?

Apparently, Farage has allowed himself to be interviewed by "Russia Today," the Kremlin's answer to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. If this is proof of his perfect perfidy, then what is one to make of Larry King - who has endorsed Mrs. Clinton? Mr. King has a regular program on "Russia Today." So does Ed Schultz, a partisan Democrat and former MSNBC commentator and host who has defended Mrs. Clinton.

Undeterred by facts, her voice rising to a veritable shriek, Hillary tied her conspiracy theory together by pointing to the sinister figure at the center of this vast worldwide web of subversion:

"The godfather of this global brand of extreme nationalism is Russian President Vladimir Putin. In fact, Farage has appeared regularly on Russian propaganda programs. Now he's standing on the same stage as the Republican nominee.

"Trump himself heaps praise on Putin and embrace[s] pro-Russian policies. He talks casually of abandoning our NATO allies, recognizing Russia's annexation of Crimea, and of giving the Kremlin a free hand in Eastern Europe more generally.

"American presidents from Truman to Reagan have rejected the kind of approach Trump is taking on Russia. We should, too.

"All of this adds up to something we've never seen before. Of course there's always been a paranoid fringe in our politics, steeped in racial resentment. But it's never had the nominee of a major party stoking it, encouraging it, and giving it a national megaphone. Until now."

All of this adds up to something we have seen before: from the anti-German hysteria of World War I when the teaching of the German language was forbidden and German composers banned from the concert halls, to the lunacy that saw Japanese-Americans trundled into internment camps during World War II, right up until the cold war era when anyone who opposed the Vietnam war and our foreign policy of supporting right-wing dictators was smeared as a "Kremlin agent." It's a tiresomely recurrent theme in the history of American politics, the tried and true method of the demagogues who want to end all debate by smearing their political opponents as agents of a foreign power.

Let's be clear about what the Clinton campaign is saying here: they are accusing the Trump campaign of collaborating with the Kremlin in acts of espionage. Averring that it was the Russians who hacked both the Democratic National Committee and the Clinton Foundation - assertions offered without evidence - they have explicitly accused the Kremlin

Foundation - assertions offered without evidence - they have explicitly accused the Kremlin of trying to put Trump in the White House as part of a sinister scheme to conquer eastern Europe. As Clinton campaign manager Robby Mook put it:

"Real questions [are] being raised about whether Donald Trump himself is just a puppet for the Kremlin in this race' Mook added, pointing to Trump's criticisms of NATO. 'We now need Donald Trump to explain to us the extent to which the hand of the Kremlin is at the core of his own campaign.'"

If Mrs. Clinton truly believes that Putin is "the godfather" of the Trump movement, and those who oppose her election, then what can we expect from her administration if and when she occupies the Oval Office?

If all these people are Kremlin pawns, if the tentacles of this pro-Russian underground really do reach into the GOP and the Vast Right-wing Conspiracy, then it's reasonable to expect that President Hillary Clinton will do all in her power to quash this sinister cabal, which surely represents a threat to our national security. It is illegal for US citizens to act as unregistered agents of a foreign power: presumably this conspiracy will be investigated by the FBI, and its leaders brought to trial. Perhaps we'll see the revival of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, the banning of "subversive" "pro-Russian" organizations and media outlets, and a wholesale purge of this foreign conspiracy from American political life.

I might add that the same sort of smear campaign was launched by the Bush administration and its neoconservative allies in the run up to - and during - the Iraq war. "You're either with us," declared then President Bush, "or you're with the terrorists." Neocon enforcer David Frum declared that conservative and libertarian opponents of the war - including this writer - had "turned their backs on their country," and were acting as agents of Saddam Hussein. That Frum is now echoing Mrs. Clinton - along with a growing contingent of his fellow neocons, who openly support her - comes as no surprise.

While the implications of Hillary's smear campaign do not bode well for our civil liberties here on the home front, the international consequences promise to be even worse.

The borderline between domestic policy and international policy is nebulous to nonexistent. As I've explained at length in defining my theory of what I call "libertarian realism," the latter is largely determined by the former. Political elites pursue a foreign policy that justifies the preservation and extension of their own privileges, perks, and power. If Hillary Clinton has to start Cold War II in order to win this election, then there is no doubt she is willing to do that. What this portends for her foreign policy should strike fear in us all.

For if she is positing a Vast Right-wing Pro-Russian Conspiracy as her enemy here at home, what measures is she likely to take against the Russians abroad? One could reasonably aver that her political rhetoric won't necessarily translate into World War III, but surely she will have to follow up to some degree in order to maintain her credibility. And if she really believes her own hopped-up rhetoric, then can we really be sure her actions vis-à-vis the Russians won't result in another Cuban missile crisis - one that will turn out quite differently than the last one?

We here at Antiwar.com saw all this coming as early as 2004, and we have been warning about it ever since. That's why you read this site: because you can read tomorrow's headlines today.

But being prescient isn't enough: it doesn't pay the bills. Debunking the war propaganda generated by the "mainstream" media is more than a full-time job: I am writing this at 6:30 on Sunday morning, having started work at 3 a.m. That's because I have the rest of the day scheduled for writing yet another fundraising letter as well as reviewing the latest

bunch of documents generated by our lawsuit against the FBI.

We are facing the biggest threat to peace since the build up to the Iraq war - a determined chorus, arising from the political class, to confront the Russians on every front. Your children may soon be reenacting the old "duck and cover" routine at school, and backyard bomb shelters may be soon due to come back into style. The new cold war is upon us, and - once again - we face the very real possibility of a nuclear conflict with the Russians.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#9

Sputnik

August 29, 2016

Real Propaganda: NY Times Says Kremlin Uses Sputnik, RT as Disinformation Weapon
By Bill Moran

On Sunday the New York Times published the latest in the Western media's assault on Russian funded news outlets predicated solely on the source rather than the substance of the underlying reporting titled: A Powerful Russian Weapon: The Spread of False Stories. The 2,000 word article, if it deserves to be called that, claimed that outlets like Sputnik and RT are providing intentionally inaccurate or distorted reports to our viewers but failed to provide any evidence to substantiate the claim.

"The Kremlin uses both conventional media - Sputnik, a news agency, and RT, a television outlet," claims Neil MacFarquhar without considering the gravity of his statement. This statement accuses, in no uncertain terms, American writers and television personalities of participating in a treasonous plot to subvert American democracy - that's quite a charge, but is there anything to back it up?

First of all, no evidence was provided that we are somehow controlled by the Kremlin and there never will be any evidence because it does not exist. It may surprise the New York Times to learn that our US writers do not speak with Vladimir Putin or Dmitry Peskov over our morning coffee prior to our shift.

Second, no evidence was provided to challenge the accuracy of any specific report. Instead, on the domestic scene, the author claims that "RT often seems obsessed with the United States, portraying life there as hellish. It's coverage of the Democratic National Convention, for example, skipped the speeches and focused instead on scattered demonstrations."

Not really. It is true that we covered the fallout and implications of the WikiLeaks document leak that showed leading figures in the US media, including Nevada's dean of the political press corps Jon Ralston, regurgitating intentionally false narratives about Bernie Sanders spun by the DNC "without attribution" - we did cover that subversion of the US democracy, but we did not create it.

If the only news outlets that existed in the United States were Sputnik and RT, or if our viewers observed no news content from additional sources and did not possess Twitter accounts of their own then perhaps the coverage balance would be off. However, we do not exist in a vacuum and it is equally important to point out that the mainstream media did not cover protests at all and heavily downplayed the controversy surrounding the DNC - Wolf Blitzer even opened up some champagne to celebrate Hillary's speech.

Other news outlets celebrated Hillary's speech and tried to navigate the discourse back towards beating Trump. That is not our opinion. The LA Times wrote an article titled "To Fight Trump, Journalists Have Dispensed With Objectivity," the New York Times published an article titled "Trump is Testing the Norms of Objectivity in Journalism," Univision's Jorge

Ramos called on journalists saying "Neutrality is not an Option," and Glenn Greenwald said the US media is 100 percent against Donald Trump.

Compared to that type of reporting, our mere blasting of Donald Trump receiving endorsements from various white supremacist groups, saying controversial things, or the coming divestment in his candidacy by the RNC may appear to be somewhat fawning coverage since we are also covering Hillary's assault on opposition media deeming what opinions do or do not have a "right to exist" in addition to scandals associated with the WikiLeaks dump, the private email server, or the Clinton Foundation may seem untoward to a journalistic establishment that decided to take the year off from covering news.

The New York Times also claims in their story that Sputnik is part of the "Kremlin propaganda machine" that is "spreading false stories," but then it attacks our reporting for "relying heavily on articles abridged from other sources." How, precisely, can both of these things be true at the same time? It is factually impossible - it has to be one or the other.

Finally, the article cites the Swedish Defense Minister Peter Hultqvist as saying that both RT and Sputnik "depict the West as grim, divided, brutal, decadent, overrun with violent immigrants and unstable." Was this before or after our coverage of the plight of Syrian refugees and the consequences of the Turkish-EU refugee deal that leaves displaced people without protections - that's a far step from vilifying immigrants as a violent and unsympathetic population.

Maybe Hultqvist is referring to our coverage of pro-immigration rallies or inspiring social movements against police brutality. And if not that, maybe he is referring to RT being the first outlet to allow Jill Stein to speak to the American public of her vision that can literally be defined as "peace and love" or progressive Bernie Sanders who spoke with RT's Ed Schultz.

Then there is the argument that RT and Sputnik provided too much coverage of the pro-Brexit side. It could be argued that the BBC, the Guardian, etc. provided too little coverage to the Leave campaign - notably because those outlets have probably over 50 times the market share of Sputnik or RT in the UK, but they covered exclusively the side that lost. Pollsters agree with that assessment finding that the Election Day results were so surprising because people were shamed into lying when polled because the UK media made clear that it was socially unacceptable to favor Brexit.

Then again, the article itself is quite literally a fallacy - "Ad hominem is a logical fallacy in which an argument is rebutted by attacking the character, motive, or other attribute of the person making the argument, or persons associated with the argument, rather than attacking the substance of the argument itself." I ask the New York Times to kindly provide evidence before falsely accusing my colleagues and I of what amounts to a most serious crime.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#10

www.rt.com

August 28, 2016

From bad to worse: Clinton laying foundation for increasingly hostile relations with Russia
By Danielle Ryan

Danielle Ryan is an Irish freelance journalist and media analyst. She has lived in the US and Germany and is currently based in Moscow. She previously worked as a digital desk reporter for the Sunday Business Post in Dublin. She studied political reporting at the Washington Center for Politics & Journalism in Washington, DC and also has a degree in business and German. She focuses on US foreign policy, US-Russia relations and media

business and German. She focuses on US foreign policy, US-Russia relations and media bias.

Let's be honest: Hillary Clinton and Vladimir Putin aren't exactly the best of friends. But Clinton appears to be intent on making a bad situation worse - and all to score a few political points.

The relationship with Russia is one Clinton should be taking very seriously. If she wins the presidency in November, relations between Washington and Moscow will continue to be a major foreign policy priority. They have already hit a 25-year low. It should go without saying then, that when it comes to Russia, Clinton should not mince her words.

As a woman who spent four years as her country's chief diplomat, Clinton should know better than to publicly insult the leader of a country with whom she will have to work closely. Yet it appears that this has entirely escaped her awareness. Instead, she has opted to ramp up anti-Moscow paranoia to the point that it wouldn't be overly surprising if her campaign announced they were releasing an updated version of Red Channels - a 1950s pamphlet that named and shamed public figures suspected of being Kremlin sympathizers.

Grand godfather of white supremacist nationalism?

Clinton's most memorable insult directed at Putin was back in 2014 - before she was running for president - when she compared him to Adolf Hitler. In a country that celebrates their victory over Nazism every May 9, you can imagine that didn't exactly go down well. Since then, there's been a steady stream of comments from Clinton about 'the Russians' and how to deal with them. At one point, she mocked Putin's movements and voice during an interview with *Christiane Amanpour*. Hardly 'chief diplomat' kind of behavior.

But things took a bizarre turn this past week, when in a speech about the xenophobia of Donald Trump, Clinton called Putin the "grand godfather" of a global, nationalist white supremacist movement. Confused? Here's the reasoning: Trump said some nice things about Putin. Trump wants to improve relations with Moscow. There are extreme right-wing nationalists in Russia. Trump therefore is part of a global cohort of white supremacists led by Putin. Simple.

The mental gymnastics Clinton expects her supporters to engage in to make this claim stack up to anything meaningful are quite something. Ironically, in stoking fears of the Russians out to get the world, Clinton is engaging in the kind of fear-mongering that she claims to abhor in Trump. Of course, it may not be as bad as calling Mexicans immigrants rapists, as Trump did, but the root of it - appealing to fears and prejudices to manipulate and distract voters - is the same.

Putin, to be fair, has on occasion made less than flattering comments about Clinton. In response to the Hitler incident for instance, he said Clinton is not known for being "graceful in her statements" and it's "better not to argue with women" - an undeniably sexist comment to Western ears. He added that when people "push boundaries too far", it's a sign of weakness, not strength. The key difference to note here, however, is that these comments, however you feel about them, have usually been made in response or retaliation, not out of the blue.

Neither has Putin stooped to the level of American political leaders in insulting the American people. In fact, he has at times been complimentary, admiring the American creativity, openness and open-mindedness, which has led to "such amazing results" in the development of their country.

On the other hand, you get Barack Obama saying things like "Russia doesn't make

anything" and no one is "rushing to Moscow" for opportunity. Then you have John McCain, a former presidential candidate, who says things like Russia is a "gas station masquerading as a country". In the American handbook on diplomacy, under the term 'respect' it must say: You will respect and revere us, but don't expect reciprocation.

All roads lead to Moscow

But back to Clinton. In her mind, it seems everything now comes back to the Russians. DNC email leaks that expose party corruption? Russians. Her opponent? Russian agent. WikiLeaks? Russian front. Global right wing white supremacist movement? Led by Russia. What's next? I'm sorry for Clinton Foundation/State Department corruption, the Russians made me do it?

Clinton's campaign is now built on two things, neither of them having anything to do with her own credentials: 1. Convincing voters that her opponent is worse than she is, and 2. Blaming any and all embarrassing revelations on Russia. That has been the core of her campaign strategy in recent weeks. Why? Because her campaign has been so dogged by scandal, that it simply makes sense to spend less time addressing those real issues and more time pointing at distractions.

When November 8 rolls round and Clinton wins - which is likely if polls are to be believed - how will she pick up the phone to Moscow and expect that her months-long campaign built on Russophobia won't have further damaged a relationship that is so desperately in need of repair? Instead of taking out a band-aid, Clinton is reaching for a hatchet. It's stupid, short-sighted and dangerous. Imagine during the dickest moments of the Cold War, the occupant of the White House had entirely dismissed Soviet leaders and acted like diplomacy with those deplorable Russians wasn't really worth their time. Imagine if they had chosen to disengage and publicly mock them. The Cold War may have ended on a decidedly different note.

It's unlikely that the American people want any kind of serious confrontation with nuclear-armed Russia - but the cheap political points that Clinton can score today by playing the Russia card could come at a much higher price down the road.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#11

www.rt.com

August 28, 2016

'Divorced from reality: IPC disables Russian Paralympic athletes from excelling in sport'

Imposing a blanket ban on Russian Paralympians from Olympic competition may create a chaotic situation in international sports as we had in the early 80s, Ron Katz, contributor to Forbes magazine, Distinguished Career Institute Fellow at Stanford University, told RT.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport upheld the disqualification of Russia's Paralympic team from the Rio Games with all 267 athletes suspended for state-sponsored cheating.

The International Paralympic Committee welcomed the decision.

The Russian Paralympic Committee (RPC) is set to learn on Monday the results of its appeal against the decision by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) to ban all Russian athletes from the Rio 2016 Paralympics. The appeal process will be reviewed at the Federal Supreme Court of Switzerland on August 29.

RT: What do you think about the ban placed on the Russian Paralympic team?

Ron Katz: I think it is immoral, unethical and indecent.

RT: Is the Paralympic case in anyway different from the Olympic case? Shouldn't all athletes be treated equally?

RK: The IOC had a slightly better policy although it was somewhat of a confused policy. But they did not do a total ban as the IPC has done.

RT: The Court of Arbitration for Sport said the ban was 'proportionate'. Surely that verdict must be respected. Is collective punishment ever appropriate?

RK: They said it was proportionate, but I don't know how they could say that, for several reasons. One is that there is no proof that each and every one of these athletes did something bad, so if you didn't do anything bad, there could be no proportionate punishment. They also did not cite any precedents and that makes sense because there are no precedents. And I think that these people, private people, are really sort of divorced from reality. If you look at their headquarters, it looks like the Palace of Versailles. They are so sort of issuing these dictates that affect people who had been working every day before an important goal. They don't really have any credibility, legitimacy or authority in my opinion.

RT: Why do you think a blanket ban was imposed?

RK: I don't know. You would have to ask the IPC. It makes no sense whatsoever in my opinion. Of course, there are allegations of state-sponsored doping. But in my opinion, individual doping is worse than state-sponsored doping. Because with individual doping people have free will; with the alleged state-sponsored doping we don't know whether people had free will or not. But it doesn't matter, doping is doping and there is a system to detect who dopes. And they should just use that system. They should use a testing system and if someone fails a test, then they should be punished. And if they don't fail the test, they should be rewarded or permitted to compete.

RT: So how should Russia have been punished for its state-sponsored doping program?

RK: That is something that has to be worked out between Russia as a sovereign country and with the other sporting organizations. But I think the appropriate thing to do would be to conduct an investigation, for the Russian authorities themselves to conduct an investigation and to find out who, if anyone, committed a wrong. And if they find people who have committed wrong, then they should issue an appropriate punishment. The only way to figure out whether the system is better or not is just through testing. And what has happened in this situation, what makes it so bad, is that these athletes are not even going to be tested to see if they passed the test. That's the real unfairness that they just never really had a chance.

RT: Other countries have had their cheats exposed without receiving blanket bans. Is the fact that the cheating was state-sponsored not enough to justify ban in Russia's case?

RK: As I said individual doping is worse than state-sponsored doping. All doping is bad. But the fact that it is state-sponsored or not, I don't think it is really relevant. Either someone passes the test, or they don't pass the test. There is a very stringent protocol for testing these athletes and that should be the final word. You don't punish somebody who may not have done anything wrong and of course Russian athletes are born in Russia, that's not their fault, that's just an accident of birth, just like the US athletes are born in the US and Mongolian athletes are born in Mongolia. That has nothing to do with whether they should be allowed to compete or not. The mission statement of the IPC [International Paralympic Committee] is to enable Paralympic athletes to excel in sport. And they are not doing that

committed to to enable Paralympic athletes to excel in sport, and they are not doing that. They are doing the opposite - they are disabling Paralympic athletes from excelling in sport.

RT: How successful do you think the blanket ban will be in deterring future cheats/state-level corruption?

RK: I don't think it will be successful at all. I think it will cause chaos because Russia is a sovereign country. And if it feels that it has been treated unfairly, then it may take actions. And then we will have a chaotic situation in international sports as we did in the early 80s and that will serve nobody.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#12

www.rt.com

August 24, 2016

Editorial

American defense contractors think you have been brainwashed

[Text with graphics here <https://www.rt.com/op-edge/356995-cepa-us-defense-contractors-media-russia/>]

According to the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), a Warsaw-based lobby group funded by defense contractors and the US government, the act of reading this article may mean you're unable to think for yourself.

A century ago, Edward Bernays, described as the "father of public relations" by The New York Times, helped sell the US intervention in the First World War by conjuring a campaign which insisted that America was "bringing democracy to all of Europe." The aftermath of the war didn't live up to the promise, but the success of the slogan changed approaches to foreign policy forever.

Because contemporary American media had described German messaging as "propaganda" through the war, Bernays preferred the softer term - "PR." As it happens, almost 100 years on, the situation remains the same in the US: the bad guys use "propaganda," "disinformation" and "agitprop," meanwhile, Uncle Sam uses "soft power," "promotion" and "the truth."

Their British allies go further with the myopia. You see, London employs a social media brigade known as "Facebook warriors." These guys allegedly battle opponents who are known as "Russian Trolls."

According to two Guardian reports, the British team consists of 1,000 well-paid professional soldiers and the ostensible Russian group is made up of a few dozen moderately-salaried temps. Yet, the supposed Russian variant is painted as a menace to the Free World and the British one as a bunch of jolly good folk.

The Absurdity of Mendacity

A couple of years ago, the activist Peter Pomerantsev produced a report on Russian media with its own catchy jingle - "The Menace of Unreality" - for Mikhail Khodorkovsky's American special interest group. As it landed during the peak of the Ukraine crisis, it gained quite a bit of traction.

Thus, when we learned that Pomerantsev had moved on to work for the American defense industry, we wondered what his next publication would contain. It dropped earlier this

month, co-authored with the anti-Russia diehard Edward Lucas, as "Winning the Information War."

After a single read, the only question that springs to mind is whether the sponsors have asked for their money back, because what is professed to be a freshly baked opus is pretty much a rehash of Pomerantsev's 2014 assault on common sense, festooned with added silliness.

Essentially, the dynamic duo's advice to Western governments goes like this: "muzzle our enemies' messaging and make our own better." This is some groundbreaking strategy, indeed.

Some bits are cruder than others. Lucas and Pomerantsev write about the attempts to de-radicalize Islamic extremists in the US and Britain. They then propose that "similar initiatives should be undertaken with radicalized, pro-Kremlin supporters, those on the far left and the far right, and Russian speakers."

So, in other words, this pair of lobbyists is comparing Russian speakers (over 300 million at the last count), particularly Russian citizens, 80 percent of whom support the country's president, and people who dare to understand Russia's point-of-view, to Islamic State. As the Canadian professor Paul Robinson wrote, "Are they suggesting anti-brainwashing programs for people who watch RT?"

To fit this agenda, a nation, that's given the world much of its high culture and scientific innovation is being equated to barbaric terrorists who have slaughtered thousands of innocents and eradicated signs of civilization where they have conquered. The irony of course is that, Russia largely wants to be left alone (that is, without foreign geopolitical meddling).

Of course, this wouldn't be the first time...

We Decide the Truth

Another big proposal is to re-write history. As we know, the Soviet Union won World War Two, and Russia was the largest constituent republic of that country. This greatly upsets our 'infowarriors', who believe the memory of the victory stifles Western attempts to reduce Russian influence in other ex-USSR states. As a result, they propose "a working group on historical trauma" to address this inconvenient historical fact. "A working group of psychologists, historians, sociologists and media specialists should create an "ideas factory" to develop ways of approaching historical and psychological trauma and highlighting other narratives," the report states. This is totally not at all like something out of an Orwell novel. Nope.

Things get more bizarre when Pomerantsev repeats a message from his 2014 spiel about the need for censorship of Russian media. "A strong case exists to create an international commission under the auspices of the Council of Europe that would evaluate channels for hate speech, disinformation and other faults."

Two years ago with Michael Weiss (now a lobbyist at NATO's Atlantic Council appendage and then an editor of American state broadcaster RFE/RL) he suggested the "possibility of a ratings system for disinformation...to create a benchmark for behavior," without suggesting who would regulate it or decide which information was admissible and which was "propaganda." Let's say this started with suppression of the Russian press. Where would it lead to next? Would any organization that didn't agree with NATO's perspective get shut down?

The Reality of the Message

The Reality of the Menace

While the merits of this CEPA presentation are dubious, the work does represent some dangers in its own way, because policy makers, unaware of its origin, may actually be duped by it. Dressed up in think tank clothing, it attempts to lend an academic sheen to what is ultimately a drive for censorship in Europe.

To that end, we see the lobbyists involved have given themselves fancy titles. Pomerantsev is labeled as the "project chair for CEPA's information warfare initiative" and a "Legatum Institute Senior Fellow." At the same time, Lucas is described as a "Senior Vice President" at CEPA. All this sounds very posh and intellectual.

The reality is far murkier. There is no mention of Legatum's questionable funding and role, which outlined in this Pando investigation. CEPA is not some neutral entity providing a home for noble scholars, but an organization that is largely funded by defense manufacturers, including Bell Helicopters, Boeing, FireEye, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and Sikorsky. And, very interestingly, the US Department of Defense is also ponying up some cash.

And are they getting bang for their buck? Well, Lucas himself has made sure to promote Raytheon on his Twitter account in the past both directly and by retweeting others who support their products. He also appeared on FireEye "webinars."

At this point you might be asking: why are arms manufacturers so interested in bankrolling a faux-academic lobby firm in Poland?

To answer that, we might want to think back to 1998, and a particular New York Times article, which revealed that "American arms manufacturers, who stand to gain billions of dollars in sales of weapons, communication systems and other military equipment if the Senate approves NATO expansion, have made enormous investments in lobbyists and campaign contributions to promote their cause in Washington."

Because, "the end of the cold war has (had) shrunk the arms industry and forced it to diversify. But expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization - first to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, then possibly to more than a dozen other countries - would (and did) offer arms makers a new and hugely lucrative market." CEPA is a logical progression here in that it extends its activities into Eastern Europe itself, where it can be used to whip up hysteria about how dangerous Russia is, thus inspiring policy makers to increase military spending.

In February this year, after extensive lobbying by groups like CEPA, the Pentagon proposed quadrupling (through NATO) its budget for European defense. Obviously the biggest winners from such largesse would be defense contractors and the US Department of Defense, the very people who fund CEPA. The circle is complete.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#13

Russia Beyond the Headlines/Kommersant

www.rbth.ru

August 29, 2016

Losing the good fight: IKEA's struggle to remain honest in Russia

The Swedish furniture retailer IKEA is landed with hundreds of lawsuits in Russia every year. It insists that these lawsuits are retaliation for its honesty and determination to do clean business in a country where corruption is part of the system. Yet if investigators are to be believed, even IKEA has been unable to buy land, build its stores on it and connect them to the power grid by purely honest means.

ILYA DASHKOVSKY, KOMMERSANT

In early August, searches were conducted in Swedish furniture giant IKEA's Russian head office in Khimki (a town in the suburbs of Moscow where IKEA also has a shopping mall) in connection with an old land dispute. Two weeks later, a former IKEA manager, Joakim Virtanen, turned himself in to investigators, this time in connection with another controversy, related to the lease of electricity equipment. IKEA has been in litigation regarding these two disputes for over 10 years.

IKEA is an absolute champion in terms of the number of court cases it has had in Russia. The register of arbitration cases contains over 200 lawsuits against the Swedish concern, while the total number of court cases involving it has exceeded 560. All the other major retailers in Russia taken together would not have a tenth of this number of court cases between them.

The company itself is convinced that this is the result of its ambition to conduct honest business in the country and that other firms avoid such complications by paying bribes.

In 2010, Lennart Dahlgren, the former CEO of IKEA Russia, released a book called *Despite Absurdity: How I Conquered Russia While It Conquered Me*, in which he told the tale of what it costs to be true to one's principles while surrounded by rampant corruption. The book named many people who obstructed its business, from the mayor of Khimki to the governor of the Moscow Region, and became a hit.

Market players, however, say that it is hard to be a saint while doing business in Russia and gladly cite examples of IKEA's blunders.

Lawyer for special meatballs

To begin with, there are questions about the lawyer whom IKEA has chosen to represent its interests. The Lawyers and Business firm has represented the company in many lawsuits for several years already. In 2015, its owner, Sergei Kovbasyuk, defended IKEA in a class action lawsuit over a case of poisoning in the IKEA café, famous for its meatballs. Market sources maintain that the lawyer's functions go far beyond that.

Kovbasyuk's name became well-known in connection with a number of controversial cases. There were also media reports that Kovbasyuk used to work for the FSB (Russian Federal Security Service), hence his connections and astronomical fees. The lawyer himself has refused to talk to the press. Sources are convinced that his law firm renders services in so-called "special situations." This euphemism usually implies corruption and corporate raiding as well as resolving "sensitive issues" with the authorities or other market players.

"When foreign companies do not understand the rules of the game in Russia, they hire intermediaries - legal and consulting groups or GR experts," said Ilya Shumanov, deputy head of Transparency International - Russia. "These positions are highly corruptogenic and people who fill them are entrusted with resolving the most sensitive issues,"

Not furniture alone

Almost all the lawsuits are filed against the IKEA subsidiary that builds the company's stores. In all countries, IKEA builds its shopping malls itself instead of renting premises. However, in Russia IKEA has come up against more problems than in other countries - primarily because it is hard to build things. (In the dealing with construction permits section of the Doing Business ranking, Russia is in 119th position out of 189.) This creates many opportunities for corruption.

The plots that IKEA was given for construction are mainly located on former collective farm land. "These plots have a tangled privatization history, with most cases being so old that it is often impossible to find all the related documents," says the head of practice at the Infralex law firm, Sergei Shumilov.

For example, in Khimki the land was leased by the company, after which it was bought out, when suddenly in 2012 the former owner, while conducting inspections, discovered that it no longer had the land.

"Does this mean that no inventory was carried out for many years? And nobody knew or saw that this land is now the site of a major construction project that officials and the media are talking about. I personally find it strange, to say the least," says Maxim Gladkikh-Rodionov, managing director of the Confidence audit firm.

It's hard to be honest in Russia

In 2010, there was a corruption scandal in St. Petersburg involving Per Kaufmann, IKEA director for Central and Eastern Europe, and Stefan Gross, IKEA director for real estate in Russia. Both were sacked practically immediately. IKEA even decided to conduct an internal investigation to find out if any more of its employees were engaged in bribery directly or indirectly.

It turned out that a bribe had been offered by a Russian contractor and the top managers were guilty of knowing it but not preventing the crime. In exchange for the bribe, officials agreed to sign a fake acceptance certificate for electricity equipment in an IKEA shopping mall. Furthermore, the project had not even been approved.

One way or another, all these stories prompt lawyers to suspect that the company may be being targeted by some influential corporate raiders. "One gets the impression that the company is simply being strongly encouraged to 'be like everybody else'," says Gladkikh-Rodionov.

Given that the Russian market is of great significance for IKEA (the 11-percent rise in the company's sales in 2015 was largely due to Russia and China), it would be justified to predict that the company will continue to have to resort widely to legal assistance.

First published in Russian in Kommersant

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#14

The Unz Report

www.unz.com

August 27, 2016

Is Putin the Godfather of Extreme Nationalism?

By Anatoly Karlin

Putin Derangement Syndrome and Trump Derangement Syndrome continue moving towards an ever more perfect union.

Josh Rogin ? @joshrogin

Hillary Clinton just said Vladimir Putin leads a world wide white supremacist movement.

Wow.

3:37 PM - 25 Aug 2016

Problem is: Putin is not actually a proponent of extreme nationalism, let alone its godfather

Problems. Putin is not actually a proponent of extreme nationalism, let alone its goal. At least, not according to the people who would presumably know best: The vast majority of, like, actual Russian nationalists.

They tend to consider Putin as a representative of sovok "multinationality," who sends "real" Russian nationalists off to jail under the infamous Article 282 (one of them, Alexander Potkin/Belov, was jailed for 7.5 years on the same day as Hillary Clinton's announcement) while allowing mass immigration and the transfer of the Russian economy to minorities and ethnic clans. 20% of Russia's billionaires are Jews according to a study by Lenta a couple of years ago, and a recently released report by Forbes Russia revealed that only one of the ten richest "clans" in Russia are ethnically Russian, or russkie. (Incidentally, that is a term that, tellingly, Putin himself hardly ever uses, preferring the ethnically neutral term "rossiyane" that refers to all Russian citizens. A quick way of estimating how "based" a Russian commentator is Ctrl-F'ing and tallying the russkie/rossiyane ratio in his texts).

Of course the irony is that the Clinton Clique tends to like those kinds of anti-Putin nationalists and their Ukrainian counterparts.

nuland-meeting-parubiy

Clinton protege Victoria Nuland meeting with Parubiy, Chairman of the Rada and founder of the Social National Party of Ukraine.

As for Putin's actual nationalist/non nationalist status, what both Pozocracy hacks and the more "svidomy" elements of the Western Alt Right fail to realize is that in between:

(1) Being an open borders "keep them at arm's length" cuck; and

never-said-this(2) Living up to the overly "optimistic"/false image that the "Russophile" wing of the Alt Right (summarized in the widely shared but 100% fake meme/quote to the right) - and the Putin Derangement Syndrome-suffering SJWs and (((neocons))) - have of Putin;

... there is a pretty big middle ground around which Putin actually falls.

Yes, many Russian nationalists are sitting under Article 282 (some of them deservedly, but yes, many of them regrettably not; it is an unjust law that should ideally go the way of the rest of Europe's "hate laws," i.e. into the dustbin of history). But, at least, Russia also imprisons many Islamic extremists and even anti-ethnic Russians under that same law (a partial lack of double standards that the Council of Europe is very unhappy about). And moderate Russian (anti-immigration) nationalists like Egor Kholmogorov - I have translated a couple of his pieces here and here - are hardly social or legal pariahs; they get to write op-eds in the nation's highest circulation newspaper, Komsomolskaya Pravda.

And there are even outright nationalists in positions of power, such as Dmitry Rogozin, who was an outright (anti-immigration) nationalist. He currently curates the military-industrial prospect and is not an altogether impossible (if highly unlikely) Presidential successor. Although with power, he has also of course strongly toned down his prior ethnonationalist rhetoric.

To reiterate, there is a very wide spectrum between a self-hating cuckold like Wolfgang Schaeuble and /pol/'s image of Ben Garrison, and on that spectrum, Putin is far closer to the likes of Trump, Le Pen, and Orban than he is to the Western political elites aka the Pozocracy (on this, at least, the Western MSM has it correct). Reasonable figures in the Alt Right recognize such as Richard Spencer recognize that they can't have their way all of the time, and as such urge people to support these sorts of "middle ground" politicians, despite their occasional concessions to cuckoldry (even though Spencer himself got arrested in and banned from in Hungary for holding an identitarian conference so he has

personal reasons to be skeptical of Orban).

However, this still does not make Putin a nationalist. In reality, like most serious politicians, Putin is a complex figure who continuously carries out an ideological balancing act (remember Angela Merkel's "multiculturalism is a failure" speech, a long time ago in a galaxy far away?). Yes, nationalism is necessarily a part of that, and yes, to a greater extent than a decade ago, but it still needs to be balanced out against liberal, conservative, and socialist countercurrents. The dominant strand within Russia's current ideological matrix is liberal-conservatism, a set of political and social ideas developed under late Tsarism and later amongst the White emigration that were perpendicular to both Marxism and Westernophile cargo cultism. The philosopher that Putin cites most frequently is Ivan Ilyin, an uncompromising anti-Stalinist emigre with views that are decidedly unorthodox (one daresays, cuckservative) for a Russian "extreme nationalist."

Here are a couple of notes I made while reading Ilyin's Our Tasks recently:

* Frankly he is much more of an anti-Communist ideologue than a Russian nationalist. He condemns in no uncertain terms those members of the White movement who were drawn towards the late Stalinist USSR by its adoption of quasi-nationalist rhetoric and is generally sanguine about Western (though not German) intentions towards Russia, casually discussing even the prospect of the atomic bombing of his country. That is decidedly strange for a nationalist, even a highly anti-Communist one.

* He even condemns the "oppression" of ethnic minorities in the USSR, whereas a staple of traditional Russian nationalist narratives on the USSR is the disproportional influence of ethnic minorities (especially the Jews) for its "anti-Russian" nature. So far he has been rather vague on the "who to blame" question as regards the Bolshevik Revolution, not going much further than "spiritual sickness." Again, that is very milquetoast stuff, for a purported nationalist.

Putin's nationalism, to the extent that it exists, boils down to a practical and materialist sort of patriotism or at most, a Human Biodiversity-naive civic nationalism:

"We do not have and cannot have any unifying idea other than patriotism. ... You said that public servants and business and all citizens in general work to make the country stronger. Because if that is the case, then each of us, each citizen will live better, and have higher incomes and be more comfortable, and so on. And that is the national idea. It isn't ideological, it isn't connected with any party or any stratum of society. It is connected to a general, unifying principle. If we want to live better, then the country must become more attractive for all citizens, more effective, and the public service and state apparatus and business must all become more effective. As you said, we work for the country, not understanding it in an amorphous way, like in Soviet times... when the country came first and then there was who knows what. The country is people, that's what working 'for the country' means."

Of course even this might be rather too much for someone who blames whitey when blacks shoot up policemen and rewards the families of Islamic terrorists with front row seats at her conventions. (Though given HRC's own "racist" skeletons - associations with KKK figures, the comments on superpredators, punitive anti-Black sentencing laws, etc. - it's quite clear that her BLM and feminist pandering rhetoric is completely cynical and mercenary).

Now to be sure, Hillary Clinton can easily get away with such comments about Putin because of the strong ignorance of Russian political realities in the West and the Russophobic tilt of the Western media. But such comments elicit more skepticism when applied to anti-elite politicians in Western countries, because by definition Westerners are more familiar with them and they are pretty clearly not true (for instance, the "nationalist"

more familiar with them and they are pretty clearly not true (for instance, the nationalist Marine Le Pen is basically the conservative mainstream of yesteryear, being infinitely closer to Charles De Gaulle than, say, Marshal Pétain). And they should elicit much more skepticism when used to smear Donald Trump, given that basically everything "racist" he has ever said was taken out of context.

Will such ceaseless lying and prevarication, of which this is but one example, eventually rebound against Hillary Clinton and the mainstream media?

And eventually, perhaps, even on American perceptions of Russia?

After all if you can't trust your media and self-proclaimed experts to tell you the truth about your own country, why should you defer to them on the Far Abroad?

Let us hope for the best but prepare for the worst.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#15

<http://theduran.com>

August 27, 2016

Masha Gessen's unpredictable spelling tea leaves

How name games became Masha Gessen's new way of undertaking Russian political analysis.

By Dmitry Babich

Masha Gessen, the ultimate nemesis of Russian authoritarianism, the time-tested Valkyrie of anti-Putin struggle, has just tested a new verbal weapon. The impact of that weapon's use on the Russia-writing community may be as unpredictable as Putin is in Masha's imagination.

In her article for the once intellectual magazine The New Yorker, Masha tried to analyze the appointment of Putin's new head of administration, Anton Vayno.

Having toyed with the idea that Vayno's appointment could mean a crackdown on Russian opposition before the Duma election (Masha had predicted dozens of such never-happening crackdowns during her twenty years in Russia) or an "all-out war with Ukraine" (for anyone knowing Masha this is actually a very optimistic forecast on her part) - so, having toyed with all of these standard "crackdowns" and "invasions", Masha decided to turn to linguistic tea leaves. Her discovery was explosive.

Here is what she wrote, at the top of her inspiration:

"A final fact about Vayno is that the letters of his last name can spell voyna, the Russian word for war. Is this the message that Putin is sending?"

Indeed, is this THE message? Having embarked on the slippery road of guessing the elite's intentions by the names of its chosen authors (Masha is analysing Vayno's book in her article), we can make astounding revelations.

Let's take the name of The Washington Post's longtime opinion editor, Fred Hiatt. The letters of his name can spell "Fear and Hate." Is this the message which The Washington Post is sending to Russia? Judging by the WaPo's jingoist editorials on Russian themes ("Mr. Putin Means War," "Stop Russia's Dangerous Moves") this is precisely THE message. And Mr. Hiatt's appointment becomes not just one more promotion of a Russophobic liar with a penchant for reporting on his own colleagues (remember Mr. Hiatt's publicly exposing his colleague Fareed Zakaria for some mistakes in Zakaria's

writings). Add some of Masha's word magic to Hiatt's militarism and bigotry - and we have a deeply symbolic move on the part of The Washington Post's editors.

Some of the Russia-bashing authors like to write in pairs, like Owen Mathews and Anna Nemtsova, Clifford Gaddy and Fiona Hill. Finding out what combinations of their names could spell out for Russia's relations with the West - that can be a fascinating game, worthy of Masha Gessen's wit and profound knowledge of Russian realities.

This game can be not a bit less serious, than, say, Fiona Hill's interviews to Le Figaro, where she suspects Putin of "not stopping with the conquest of Ukraine." If Le Figaro can publish such "analysis" from Fiona Hill, why can't we play with some of the names of the Western writers on Russian topics?

What if we combine Edward Lucas (a British author who recently "discovered" Donald Trump's huge Russian funds) and Richard Pipes (a historian, whom even his Harvard colleagues call "a Russophobe"). Edward Lucas + Richard Pipes = Mad Ed Likes War Rides. Why not? If Putin's Vayno can, in Masha's view, mean "voyna" (war), then Ed and Dick do not just MEAN war, they actually MAKE it by their writings on Russia.

And what if we combine Fareed Zakaria and Owen Mathews? Zakaria, who used his position of the invited moderator at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum in order to look for the much coveted "proof" of Putin's "admiration" for Trump (Zakaria failed with that task for the lack of the aforementioned admiration) - Fareed Zakaria certainly deserves a prominent position in Masha's spelling research. Owen Mathews, who wrote that Putin was to blame for the terrorist acts that took place in Moscow in the 2000s, is also an indispensable figure here, just like Americans are an indispensable nation in Obama's view. So, Fareed Zakaria + Owen Mathews = Read Zach's Own Self-Made News.

Timothy Snyder, who wrote that Europeans should learn democracy from the new fascist regime in Kiev, could make a nice triple with Svante Cornell (incredible lies on Russia's "aggression" against Georgia) and Andrew Kuchins (who once wrote a fictitious article on "Putin's coup"). So, Timothy Snyder + Svante Cornell and Andrew Kuchins = Mothy Science and Team Lies. Pretty much sums up these guys' activities!

But what about Masha's initial supposition that Anton Vayno's second name could spell as "voyna"? In fact, together with his first name, Anton, the whole thing could read as "No to Voyna!" (No to War!). Did you give it a thought Masha? Oh, you better don't. This is NOT the message that the modern The New Yorker and the once glorious The Washington Post would like to carry. Not only to Russia, but also to Iraq, Libya, Syria and many other countries.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#16

RFE/RL

August 29, 2016

Playing The Kremlin's Game

By Brian Whitmore

After more than two years of war in eastern Ukraine, we continue to pretend; we continue to play make believe.

We continue to pretend that what is happening in the Donbas is a civil war, when in fact it is the result of a Russian invasion.

We continue to pretend that Russia is a mediator in the conflict when it is in fact the

aggressor.

And we continue to pretend that it is the responsibility of both sides to de-escalate the fighting, when only one side is escalating.

We continue to pretend that the Minsk ceasefire deal -- which Ukraine signed practically with a gun to its head -- is anything but dead in the water.

The pretending was on full display this past weekend when German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier called on Russia and Ukraine to observe the Minsk agreement.

And the pretending will be on display next week in China when Vladimir Putin meets with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande -- but without Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko -- to discuss the conflict.

Now the problem here isn't that everybody is delusional.

In fact, everybody knows exactly what is happening here.

But the problem is one of geopolitical blackmail.

Russia is clearly intent on keeping this conflict simmering until it gets what it wants -- a pliant and obedient Ukraine that is essentially Moscow's client state.

And it uses periodic threats of escalation to get the West to play along.

And so everybody pretends. And in pretending, everybody plays the Kremlin's game.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#17

The Unz Review

www.unz.com

August 15, 2016

Michael Weiss, the Neocon's Neocon

By Anatoly Karlin

[Complete text here <http://www.unz.com/akarlin/michael-weiss-the-neocons-neocon/>]

In terms of content, the Weisses of this world are a dime a dozen. So why "expose" yet another neocon propagandist?

Because he is also very nasty, and very dangerous - as Richard Silverstein's comprehensive profile of Michael D. Weiss, just published at The Unz Review, convincingly argues.

So far as (functional) psychopathy goes, he really is one of a kind in the world of journalism.

And if pushing kompromat up the Google rankings makes at least a few people think twice before associating with him too closely, then the effort will be worth it....

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#18

The Unz Review

www.unz.com

August 15, 2016

Michael Weiss and the Iran-U.S. Hardline Nexus That Led Iranian-American to Evin Prison
By Richard Silverstein

[Complete text here <http://www.unz.com/article/michael-weiss-and-the-iran-u-s-hardline-nexus-that-led-iranian-american-to-evin-prison/>]

Wooden zoolithon structure in Portmouth, Dartmouth, New Hampshire, Russia Under the intersection of the lives of Michael D. Weiss (the Dartmouth student) and Siamak Namazi (a jailed Iranian-American). It was Weiss who helped put him there.

Weiss, age 36, has been an itinerant freelance journalist and military interventionist gun-for-hire, plying his trade from Washington DC, to London, to the outlying lands of former Russian empire, to the ruins of Syria.

With his role as CNN commentator and senior editor at the Daily Beast, he is a leading light among a new young generation of neoconservative intellectuals. These positions offer him the opportunity to shape American political discourse in much the same way Bill Kristol's Project for the New American Century, shaped U.S. militarist- interventionist foreign policy for a decade or more after its famous 1998 letter to Bill Clinton....

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#19

BBC Monitoring

August 26, 2016

Russian election debate: War on corruption

The Russian State Duma election debate on official state channel Rossiya 1 on 26 August (1450 gmt) focused on corruption among "untouchable" top officials. "Almost a thousand Russian officials previously considered untouchable have become the subject of criminal investigations for corruption," the presenter said, noting that the number was still growing.

The debate followed the previous format, with a 30-second introduction by each candidate, then a main four-minute pitch, followed by a final 30-second "last word" message.

Appearing in the debate were the following candidates for the State Duma election: Gennady Semigin, Patriots of Russia; Rifat Shaikhutdinov, Civil Platform; Oleg Mitvol, Green Party; Dmitry Marinichev, the Party of Growth; Maxim Suraikin, the Communists of Russia; Igor Korotchenko, Motherland.

Patriots of Russia - crack down on nepotism

Semigin of Patriots of Russia said corruption should be regarded on a level with treason. Corruption starts with nepotism, so there should be more stringent checks on those working in state offices, he said. Officials should bear responsibility for the actions of their subordinates, he said. He also called for stiffer penalties for those found guilty of corruption and confiscation of their assets. He listed a number of state funded projects where large-scale corruption had gone on. He also called for a shake-up of state monopolies and a "new system for fighting state corruption".

Civil Platform - fight the untouchables

Civil Platform's Rifat Shaikhutdinov said the problem stemmed from creation of a class in the 1990's who were above the law and able to bribe who they like and ignore the law. They are able to fund parties and buy off officials and deputies, he said. The struggle against these people is the key issue, he said. Shaikhutdinov said his party supports President Putin's move in 2015 to de-offshore the economy and crack down on corrupt

officials holding property abroad. He called for transparency in the system, and criticised what he called the "clan system". Russia has to put a stop to "liberalism", he said.

Green Party - need anti-corruption agency

Green Party's Oleg Mitvol mentioned President Putin's drive to crack down on corruption, and called for an intensification of that effort. He called for a dedicated "vertical agency" to deal with the problem, because sometimes competing law enforcement agencies are interfering with each other. State Duma deputies should also be accountable in corruption probes, he said, accusing some of those present by name of impropriety in their business dealings (Shaikhutdinov butted in here to reject his claims).

Party of Growth - a technological breakthrough

Party of Growth's Dmitry Marinichev, who said he had started his own business eighteen years ago as an engineer, replied to Mitvol's accusations about his business dealings (interrupted immediately by Mitvol). Marinichev said Mitvol was citing accusations made by anti-corruption campaigner Alexei Navalny, who was a sane person who might apologise later for what he had said in the press. Russia is too focused on its natural resources, and needs a technological breakthrough, he said. "Money doesn't come out of thin air," he said.

Communists of Russia - Stalinist methods will work

Maxim Suraikin from Communists of Russia - "a Stalinist party" he said with apparent pride - stood for a crackdown on corruption which he said originated with capitalism's return to Russia in the early 1990's. The solution is mass nationalisation of all the industry and business stolen at that time, he said. That will provide all the wealth necessary for a decent minimum wage, and therefore eliminate corruption. "Only with Stalinist methods can we wipe out corruption," he said, noting that China executed 50,000 people a year for such offences.

Motherland - capital punishment will sort them out

Motherland's Igor Korotchenko said corruption was the biggest threat to Russia's security. He also mentioned Putin's anti-corruption campaign, in which the FSB had arrested top officials and sent them to Lefortovo remand prison. He called for support for Putin's anti-corruption campaign, and a China-style anti-corruption drive going all the way to the top. Capital punishment is the answer, he said. "We don't need ministers with property in the West," he said. He praised Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu for making Russia's armed forces the "best in the world" in the last two years.

Last word

In their final words, in a brief 30-second appeal, each candidate appealed to voters to vote for their party on 18 September.

During the debate programme, advertisements were shown for the following parties: LDPR, Parnas, Yabloko; Communist Party (CPRF); A Just Russia; the Party of Pensioners; United Russia.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#20

www.rt.com

August 29, 2016

Senator warns of foreign provocation targeting upcoming Russian polls

The chairman of Russia's Upper House Committee for International Relations has said he expects certain hostile foreign nations to launch another campaign aimed at blackening Russia's reputation in the period around September's parliamentary elections.

"Elections are due in three weeks and I have absolutely no doubt that ill-wishers across our borders will use the election campaign and the elections themselves as yet another excuse to discredit our country and present it as an outcast nation," senator Konsantin Kosachev said at the 'In Unity with Russia' international forum, currently taking place in Moscow.

Kosachev also said he was certain that the State Duma elections scheduled for September 18 will be honest and free, and called the criticism levelled at the Russian political system by some in the West "inadequate and having nothing in common with the real situation in the country."

"We see that the course aimed at the so-called international isolation of Russia declared by the West has totally failed. This course is currently supported by a group of strong but not very numerous nations, and at the level of common people we definitely will not find any confrontation even in the Western countries," he said.

In February this year, State Duma speaker Sergey Naryshkin told the press that Russia would not invite representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) to monitor the upcoming elections because of the body's continuing discrimination against the Russian delegation and the bias of the assembly's representatives. During his announcement, Naryshkin also explained that Russia believed many processes in PACE were managed from the United States, especially those concerning the group's relations with Russia, adding that Moscow had no intention to tolerate this.

However, in May this year the Russian Foreign Ministry announced that it had plans to invite representatives from four international political blocs and organizations to this year's parliamentary elections instead of PACE monitors. These groups are the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

The head of Russia's Central Elections Commission, Ella Pamfilova, told reporters that her agency planned to invite monitors from international associations of elections bodies, such as the Association of World Election Bodies as well as European, Asian and American associations of election organizers.

A member of the commission, Vasily Likhachev, revealed that Russia has already signed bilateral agreements with 27 nations, allowing their representatives to conduct monitoring at the State Duma elections. He also said that personal invitations will be sent to US monitors, adding that if and when these invitations are accepted, the potential monitors must reply so that the Central Elections Commission can clear the personnel and allow them to gain accreditation.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#21

Vedomosti

August 24, 2016

Russian paper mulls chances of early presidential election

Maria Zheleznova, Early talk. Why the discussion of a shift of the presidential election

persists

The eve of the State Duma elections combined with the multi-figure personnel reshuffles in the system of executive power has galvanized the guesswork about the coming presidential election. The subject of an early presidential election (in 2017, for example) has become very popular.

The perpetual liberal hope of a president of all Russians is sensed in the discussion of its benefit or disadvantage to the Kremlin - the first to speak about early elections, in fact, were Alexei Kudrin and Yevgeny Gontmakher. A year ago Kudrin said plainly that if Vladimir Putin deemed it necessary for the pressing, and hence inevitable, but painful, reforms to obtain a mandate for a new term (as President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev did), he should be given the opportunity to obtain a new mandate sooner, even if it is a question of a shift of the presidential election, which, it is planned, is to be held only in the spring of 2018. The new president would simultaneously be rid also of the old government, a new one could be put together on the basis now of reform terms of reference. The intensifying crisis testifies, as it were, that extraordinary action is needed in the economy, and a special presidential election would afford the leader of the country *carte blanche* for unpopular economic reforms.

Both Putin himself and the protective circles could certainly be in need of a new mandate and new legitimacy. Putin is accustomed to running for the authorized term, but if he waits for the authorized term, the voter will by that time have accumulated for candidate Putin too many unpleasant questions, which it would be hard to brush aside with the standard glowing reports and promises, political analyst Alexei Makarkin reasons.

Putin would obviously win elections on a negative agenda also but this would not be an unreservedly triumphal victory. Hypothetical 2017 elections - before the budget has been drained conclusively - would reset the situation to zero for Putin personally, but they do not provide an answer to the question of how precisely he would avail himself of this mandate: for structural reforms, about the need for which Kudrin and Gontmakher are speaking, or, on the other hand, simply freeze the situation for a new six-year term.

True, Putin formally may not run for office again at an early election. Pursuant to the constitution, it is called only in three instances: the voluntary resignation of the head of state, impeachment, or an incapacity for exercising authority on impaired-health grounds. The two latter scenarios are unsuitable image-wise, the first, on the other hand, entails the impossibility of a retiree participating in proximate elections - a direct prohibition is contained in the Presidential Election Act. True, it extends only to the election called on account of the resignation, but not to subsequent ones - that is, in the scenario of Putin's retention of power such an arrangement would require only revisions to the act or the election, albeit for a short term, of a filler-president between Putin 3 and Putin 4 (yes, the election of another president in place of Putin may be contemplated. The subject of a real successor also warms the heart of the supporters of reforms; people with backroom hopes could simultaneously attempt to play at this, they would be picked up by counter-players).

Not early elections but conventional elections, but ahead of time, could be held, the polling date having been moved by analogy with postponed State Duma elections. Revision of the Presidential Election Act would be needed for this also. But this scenario is simpler since the Constitutional Court has already given a response on the legal purity of such a postponement, deeming that a three-month abridgment of the deputies' term on the scale of five years of work is insubstantial (it is not obvious, though, that this could be said about a year's abridgment of the presidential term). But these issues are technical: if the political decision is made, it is hardly likely that some provision of some law could block it.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#22

Rethinking Russia

<http://rethinkingrussia.ru>

August 28, 2016

Russia is trying to reestablish its status of global power and the West does not want to let this happen and is trying to retain its dominance

Interview with Vadim Trukhachev, Senior Lecturer, Department of International Relations and Foreign Area Studies, Russian State University for the Humanities.

Rethinking Russia: What are some of the reasons you would give for the political tensions between Russia and Western Europe and the USA?

Vadim Trukhachev: There are enough reasons for these tensions. The main reason is that Russia is trying to reestablish its status of global power and the West does not want to let this happen and is trying to retain its dominance. The West is unlikely to take into account its partner's interests because Russia is perceived as a losing side of the Cold War, which should be regarded only to a limited extent.

One more reason is that politicians both in Russia and in the West have a vague notion of each other. Many politicians and experts do not have enough knowledge of the mentality, culture, traditions, values and even everyday habits of the opposite side. Speaking about this, they have both similarities and differences, and all of them should be taken into account while entering into a dialogue.

Often Russia itself is not able to find its place on the global stage, understand whether it is a part of the Western civilization or an independent civilization. This hinders the country in implementing coherent policy. Besides, this annoys the West, which is wary of the reappearance of Russia's imperial ambitions and tries to stay one step ahead of Russia at the same time weakening it just to be on the safe side. This annoys Russian authorities, so the dialogue is not launched.

RR: What groups of state and non-state actors would you say benefit from tense relations between Russia and the West, cultivated both in the political elite and the population? Why do they benefit?

VT: Mostly military-industrial circles benefit from tense relations. This concerns the USA and NATO to a greater extent and Russia - to a lesser extent, but it still does concern Russia too. Presence of a big potential adversary increases the number of military contracts and, as a consequence, profits of companies, enterprises, laboratories and research centers working in military-industrial sphere.

Besides, both in Russia and in the West there are some circles that perceive each other exclusively as permanent enemies. And they take advantage of all tensions and misunderstandings to turn the society and elites to their views. Unfortunately, these circles are quite influential both in the West and in Russia. These elite groups need tensions to increase their political heft.

As for ordinary people, I do not see any groups that would benefit from tense relations between Russia and the West. It is difficult to imagine people either in Russia or in the West who would like to go to war or to be killed.

RR: Does Russian population mistrust the West? Why?

VT: The majority of Russian citizens mistrust the West and are suspicious of the West. In contrast to the Czech Republic and Poland, Russia suffered from the reforms of 1990s,

which resulted in the impoverishment of its population. People lived low. As these reforms were implemented under the slogan of "the rapprochement with the West", in the eyes of Russian people Europe and the USA, which supported the reforms, became responsible for the deterioration of the situation.

This mistrust is also connected with NATO expansion to the East and numerous anti-Russian statements of the leading European politicians, which quickly spread in Russia. The bombings of Serbia of 1999 took a heavy toll on Russia's relations with the West, while Serbia is perceived as a fraternal country in Russia. The War in South Ossetia of 2008 also had a negative effect.

The Ukrainian crisis played the major role in the growth of anti-Western sentiments. Millions of Russians were born in Ukraine, one in three have relatives or origins there. That is why, the possible rift with Ukraine is so sensitive to Russia. It is almost like the Berlin Wall dividing, in fact, one nation. And Russians are sure that mainly the West is responsible for what happened in Ukraine in 2013-2016.

RR: What are the origins of this mistrust?

VT: Russian citizens mistrust the West because they have little knowledge of Europe and North America. About 70% of Russian population have never been abroad. And many of those who traveled abroad have never gone to Europe. The reason for this is the harsh visa regime between Russia and EU and especially between Russia and the USA and Russia and Canada. It is a big obstacle that does not allow Russians to stop being afraid of the West.

I would also mention Western media. They pay much attention to Russia, but almost 80% of their materials are strongly negative towards Russia. There are many planted or highly provocative articles, where Russia is precariously charged with either sending refugees to Europe or cooperating with terrorists. And there is no information about Russia without politics. As a result, people in Russia think that their country is deliberately demonized in the West.

RR: Do you think this wariness renders peoples' choice of the media they read/watch selective?

VT: No, there is no direct links. The matter is that near a half of Russian population does not use Internet, people in villages and small towns often have access only to 2-3 federal TV-channels and the can not afford buying a satellite dish. The problem is that not only those who watch federal channels, but also those who surf the net, read Western media and travel abroad mistrust the West.

I would say, pro-Western minority of the Russian population avoids state media. And vice versa: anti-Western part of the population rejects Western and pro-Western Russian media. But once again it is not a majority.

RR: Do you think a negative opinion of the West amongst Russian people has an impact on the state's decision making?

VT: Unfortunately, it is true. For the last 20 years, mistrust and suspicion towards the West have been spreading amongst Russian people. If tomorrow somebody says that the policies of the EU and the US are right (especially of the US), people will not even understand this. So, the majority of the decisions are made by the authorities in accordance with public sentiment.

For its part, the West has not made efforts to overcome these sentiments. Criticizing Vladimir Putin and Russia is not a way out. And the refusal under the doubtful pretext to lift

...and Russia is not a way out. And the refusal under the doubtful pretext to lift or at least to ease sanctions provokes even more annoyance with the fact that Europe and North America are closing from Russia, not from its authorities, but from its population. This annoys people and only range them around the country's authorities.

RR: How has the perception of the West by the politicians in Russia changed since 1991? What about popular opinion? What are the reasons?

VT: In the early 1990s Russian elite was oriented towards the West and was ready to cooperate in all possible spheres. Russian authorities even tried to make a copy of Europe out of Russia and saw themselves as a part of the Western elite. But Europe and the USA perceived this openness of Russia as weakness and decided that Russia may not be taken into account. And nobody was going to make Russian elite a part of the Western one.

NATO expansion, bombings of Serbia and a number of color revolutions in the post-Soviet area provoked wariness of Russian political elite. It still wanted to become a part of the Western elite, but these steps made it seek for an alternative to the cooperation with the West. Russia needed a plan B in case that their attempts to establish relations with the West fail. And the Ukrainian crisis only stirred up this search.

As for the population, it was first of all concerned with open borders, which they did not get. The authorities' attempts to fit in the Western elite caused wariness among people for the same reasons that the authorities began to mistrust the West. In this case there are no great differences between the elite and the population.

RR: Do you think cooperation between Russia and the West is desirable? Is it viable? What forms should this cooperation take?

VT: The only alternative to cooperation is confrontation or even war. At least from this perspective, cooperation between Russia and the West is highly desirable. There are some evident areas of common interest. Russia cannot do without western technologies, Europe (and to some extent the USA) - without Russian raw materials. Many Russians immigrating to Europe or the US work for the leading laboratories, so there is need not only for our raw materials, but also for our brains.

Despite all obstacles, cultural cooperation is developed. Russia and the West cannot do without each other in the sphere of space exploration. They should cooperate to combat international terrorism. Cooperation in the sphere of tourism would be quite promising, but here comes the problem of visa regimes, that I have already mentioned.

Whichever sphere of cooperation we talk about, it should be a two-way road. The West should not demand one-way concessions from Russia. Russia, in its turn, should not call the West "a different, hostile civilization". The rules of the game should be set out by the states together.

RR: What groups of state and non-state actors would you say benefit from the cooperation of the West and Russia?

VT: Almost all actors involved will benefit from the cooperation except for military-industrial sector, "professional Russophobes" in the West and "professional anti-Westerners" in Russia.

Interview by Nora Kalinskij

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

Wall Street Journal

August 27, 2016

Latvia's Wariness Over Russia Raises Civil Rights Concerns at Home

Petition questioning country's independence results in six-month prison sentence

By JURIS KAZA and DAVID GAUTHIER-VILLARS

RIGA, Latvia—In this former Soviet republic, two ostensibly tongue-in-cheek challenges to the nation's independence are causing trouble for the authors—and raising concerns about civil rights.

Days after Deniss Barteckis posted an online petition calling for Latvia to join the U.S. last spring, police raided his apartment in Riga, seizing all electronic devices including his 7-year-old daughter's tablet.

That followed the Feb. 26 conviction of Maksim Koptelov, a 31-year-old film student, for violating a criminal law against incitement to destroy Latvia's independence with a similar petition proposing union with Russia.

Each maintains their action wasn't serious. But the Baltic country's tough response has focused attention on how far authorities can go to prosecute alleged enemies of the state without breaching basic principles they agreed to adhere to upon joining the European Union, such as freedom of speech.

Such questions are being raised across much of Eastern Europe, where governments in Warsaw, Budapest and elsewhere have adopted a more authoritarian tone.

Latvia's Security Police said a probe into Mr. Barteckis's petition was under way on suspicion it posed a threat to Latvia's sovereignty.

Latvian government officials said they couldn't comment on the police investigation or on court matters.

Since parting ways with the Soviet Union shortly before its 1991 demise, Latvia has been looking west: It joined the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 2004 and adopted the euro as its currency in 2014.

Despite this steady geopolitical shift, Latvian authorities have been worried that the country's Russian minority—about a quarter of the total population of 2 million—was looking east.

Those concerns swelled two years ago when a newly assertive Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean peninsula—which is largely ethnic Russian—prompting some Latvian nationalists to describe ethnic Russians in the Baltics as a potential menace.

Latvia recently adopted a law to toughen the penalties for incitement against the country's independence. Prime Minister Maris Kucinskis has said Latvia needed to defend itself against what he described as Russian campaigns of propaganda and disinformation. "Russia has unfortunately started a hybrid war," Mr. Kucinskis said at a news conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in April.

Russia has said it had no plan to attack Baltic countries but has pledged to defend the rights of ethnic Russians abroad.

Under Soviet rule, it was calling for Latvia's independence that carried risk.

Latvia was occupied by the Red Army in spring 1940. A new parliament was elected and

its first order of business was to petition for Latvia's admission to the U.S.S.R.-which Moscow immediately accepted.

Karlis Skenderskis was a 22-year old medical student in Riga in 1984 when he was summoned by the KGB and interrogated for having allegedly spread secessionist ideas, according to a recent study of the former Soviet secret police.

"I suppose someone ratted on me," Mr. Skenderskis, now 54, said in an interview. He said he denied all accusations and was let go, but added the encounter with the KGB led him to be cautious about expressing opinions.

Mr. Koptelov, who is free pending appeal of his conviction and six-month sentence, says he thought he had no reason to hide his ideas in modern-day Latvia.

In March 2014, days after Russia moved into Crimea, he wrote in Russian on Avaaz, an online platform, that Latvia's entry into the Russian Federation would open "vast prospects for development."

In a post-script, he wrote: "In fact, this document doesn't bear any significance and happens to be a joke."

Acting on public complaints, Security Police identified Mr. Koptelov as the author of the petition, which he signed with his first name only, according to court documents.

During a monthslong trial, Mr. Koptelov said his petition was inspired by bitterness that his late father had lived out his last years with a derisory pension.

He told the court that he had sought to "joke about the Latvian state the way it had joked with his father," according to the court documents.

A legal expert called by the Security Police, Lauris Liepa, testified the petition could be seen as an attack on the "core value" of the Latvian constitution.

Yelena Kyjatkovska, a human-rights lawyer based in Riga, said she had found no precedent to the Koptelov case in post-Soviet Latvia's jurisprudence.

She called it "a clear case" for the European Court for Human Rights. "It raises serious issues regarding the freedom of expression," she said.

Mr. Koptelov's attorney, Ilona Bulgakova, said she would take the case there if they lose their appeal in local courts. The trial court had "brought shame to Latvia," she said.

Mr. Barteckis, a freelance reporter, said in an interview that his petition to join the U.S. "was just a reaction against a disproportionate punishment on Mr. Koptelov."

Mr. Koptelov's petition is still online; As of Aug. 22, it had garnered 7,540 signatures. Mr. Barteckis's had 130.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#24

The American Conservative

www.theamericanconservative.com

August 18, 2016

White Russia Makes Progress

A visit to Minsk reveals a peaceful transition to economic freedom.

By ION BASIL UTILEV

Jon Basil Utley is publisher of The American Conservative.

Belarus is an interesting, attractive country, certainly off the beaten track. A beautiful, rebuilt capital city of Minsk (mostly destroyed along with 30 percent of the country's population during World War II), with wide boulevards and parks and superbly clean, belies its old reputation as the last dictatorship in Europe. Its economy is heavily statist, but 30 percent is private enterprise, and its information-technology sector is world class (see below). Its rating in the World Bank's Doing Business, which compares all the world's nations, is surprisingly high and improving.

The nation borders Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania. It has its own language, similar to but distinct from Russian, and its own long history. It was once an integral part of the Lithuanian empire, which stretched down to the Black Sea. It then was subordinated to the growing power of Czarist Russia and later became an integral part of the Soviet Union. Belarus also became an industrial/technological center where many of the Soviet Union's heavy and sophisticated industries were located. It has a very skilled and educated workforce.

I was invited there to speak at a conference on "Understanding Belarus Security." It was co-organized by Washington's Jamestown Foundation, Germany's Konrad Adenauer Institute, and the Liberal Institute of Belarus under the auspices of the Minsk Dialogue. It continues the tradition of Belarus serving as a neutral regional hub for inter-European diplomacy following the Russian-Ukrainian ceasefire agreement. Our delegation also met with top foreign-ministry officials on improving understanding and relations with America.

Belarus has become more independent of Russia since the Ukrainian conflict, rejected Moscow's plans to establish a new airbase on its territory, and refused to join Russia's trade war with Ukraine. Repression is mild, and the government retains a degree of popularity for providing stability and substantial economic growth. Witness the chaos in neighboring Ukraine, and how "privatization" of Russian state industries just ended in impoverishment and handing them over to billionaires. People are not so anxious for possibly chaotic, unjust "democracy," as long as their government delivers safety, order, and economic growth. Grigory Joffe, Jamestown's Belarus expert, writes in "The Declining Fortunes of the Belarusian Opposition,"

Specifically, the government led by President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, since 1994, was instrumental in propping up Belarusians' civic identity, ensuring the country's stability and security (Belta.by), building up its infrastructure, pursuing economic development, boosting the quality of governance, and even improving living standards-by several measures exceeding those in Belarus's culturally close Eastern Slavic neighbors.

Many formerly communist East European nations are today, surprisingly, more dynamic economically than many debt-ridden West European nations weighed down by years of socialist baggage. After the conference I also spoke to students at the Liberal Institute in a hall called the "John Galt Club," named after the famous character in Atlas Shrugged. The institute's director is a very dynamic Belarusian student, Yauheni Preiherman, now studying for his Ph.D. in England. It was also he who helped organize the main conference. He introduced me to many of the students and I was very impressed by them.

Belarus' Surprising Economic Ratings

More than 50 percent of goods produced in the country are delivered for export. The list of export products is sophisticated and varied. Among the major export commodities of Belarus are refined oil products, semi-conductors, potash and nitrogen fertilizers, metal products, busses, heavy trucks, tractors, chemical fibers, yarns, tires, dairy and meat products, and sugar. The private sector is led by exports from its brilliant information-

technology services (IT) based at the Minsk High Tech Park free zone. The export of IT services grew from \$50 million in 2005 to \$800 million in 2015.

Belarus imports are mainly composed of energy resources (oil and natural gas), raw materials and components, metal products, raw materials for chemical industry, machine parts, and manufacturing equipment. Belarus has trade relations with more than 180 countries. The nation offers low costs and is attractive for tourism. It has eleven impressive war museums, one in downtown Minsk, another in the countryside at the old Stalin Line.

Doing Business measures the ease or problems of starting and running a business in nearly all nations. It was discussed at the conference and has become a very effective means to press Third World and former communist governments to facilitate and encourage economic growth.

Belarus rates surprisingly high on several measures. The nation ranks 12th in the world for "starting a business," compared to Austria at 106th, France at 32nd, and Spain at 82nd. For "registering a property," Belarus is number 7, Germany 62, and Ireland, known for its pro-business environment, 39. Rated for "ease of doing business," Belarus is 44, compared to Ireland at 17, France at 27, and Spain at 33. For "enforcing contracts," Belarus is number 29, Belgium is 53, Chile is 56, Poland is 55, England is at 33. See the Doing Business link above for exact details. Still, the regime is pressed to privatize its heavy industries, still mostly government owned. There is little street crime, which also makes the nation attractive for foreign investors. Economic freedom pales when street crime, kidnapping, and armed robbery are rampant, as in some Latin American countries.

Shakedowns and bribes to the police and government inspectors are a very common aspect of post-communist regimes. From what I learned, Belarus limits such small time, yet cumulatively devastating corruption, unlike Russia for example.

In conclusion, Belarus is progressing in ways favorable to economic progress and is much freer than its reputation as a surviving "Marxist" state. The British Guardian, in a positive article, asks "Is it accurate to call Belarus a dictatorship?" Although political opponents are sometimes jailed (a dozen in 2013), they are then shortly released. The dynamic, free market, and the rising living standards of neighboring Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Poland, are vibrant examples for them. Often American policymakers don't appreciate that "in much of the non-Western world, people desire order more than democracy," writes Jamestown's Grigory Joffe (see "Understanding Belarus"). He writes of "a legitimate fear of evil, destructive ... behavior by their fellow countrymen that only a strong government can restrain. ... Democracy cannot be exported, much less imposed, by an outside force. Simply put, one cannot build democracy other than on the homegrown foundation of civility and trust." Having lived in lawless countries I concur totally with Joffe's comments. Opposition movements in such nations demanding "democracy" are often supported by Washington, but many or most are not Jeffersonians in waiting.

Effective groups such as Students For Liberty and the Atlas Network, which I have long supported, help local think tanks and such groups to spread Western concepts of individual freedom, limited government, property rights, low taxes, and economic progress. Only a nation's own people can really bring it progress. Washington is too ham-fisted and all too eager to threaten or even start wars as a "solution" to promote freedom. Then we wonder at the chaos our military interventions create.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#25

The Unz Review

www.unz.com

August 25, 2016

Assessing the Russian Military as an Instrument of Power

By The Saker

[Text with links and graphics here <http://www.unz.com/tsaker/assessing-the-russian-military-as-an-instrument-of-power/>]

It has been a quarter of a century now since the fall of the Soviet Union and yet the memory of the Soviet Armed Forces is still vivid in the minds of many of those who lived through the Cold War or even remember WWII. The NATO-sponsored elites of Eastern Europe still continue to scare their citizens by warning of a danger of "Russian tanks" rolling down their streets as if the Soviet tanks were about to advance on Germany again. For a while, the accepted image of a Russian soldier in the West was a semi-literate drinking and raping Ivan who would attack in immense hordes with little tactical skills and an officer corps selected for political loyalty and lack of imagination. Then the propaganda narrative changed and now the new Russian bogeyman is a "little green man" who will suddenly show up to annex some part of the Baltics to Russia. Putatively pro-Russian "experts" add to the confusion by publicly hallucinating of a Russian deployment in Syria and the Mediterranean which could wrestle the entire region away from Uncle Sam and fight the entire NATO/CENCOM air forces and navies with confidence. This is all nonsense, of course, and what I propose to do here is to provide a few very basic pointers about what the modern Russian military can and cannot do in 2016. This will not be a highly technical discussion but rather a list of a few simple, basic, reminders.

Russia is not the Soviet Union

The first and most important thing to keep in mind is that the Russian military is truly focused on the defense of Russian territory. Let me immediately say that contrary to much of the Cold War propaganda, the Soviet military was also defensive in essence, even if it did include a number of offensive elements:

- 1) The military control of all of Eastern Europe as a "buffer zone" to keep the US/NATO away from the Soviet Union's borders.
- 2) An official ideology, Communism, which was messianic and global in its stated goals (more or less, depending on who was in power)
- 3) A practice of global opposition to the US Empire anywhere on the planet with technical, political, financial, scientific and, of course, military means

Russia has exactly zero interest in any of these. Not only did the nature of modern warfare dramatically reduce the benefits of being forward deployed, the messianic aspects of Communism have even been abandoned by the Communist Party of Russia which is now focused on the internal socio-economic problems of Russia and which has no interest whatsoever in liberating the Polish or Austrian proletariat from Capitalist exploitation. As for a global military presence, Russia has neither the means nor the desire to waste her very limited resources on faraway territories which do not contribute to her defense.

But the single most important factor here is this: the overwhelming majority of Russians are tired and fed up with being an empire. From Peter I to Gorbachev, the Russian people have paid a horrific price in sweat, tears, blood and Rubles to maintain an empire which did absolutely nothing for the Russian people except impoverish them and make them hated in much of the world. More than anything else, the Russians want their country to be a "normal" country. Yes, safe, powerful, wealthy and respected, but still a normal country and not a global superpower. Many Russians still remember that the Soviet Politburo justified the occupation and subsequent war in Afghanistan as the completion of an "internationalist duty" and if somebody today tried that kind of language the reply would

be "to hell with that". Finally, there is the sad reality that almost all the countries which were liberated by Russia, not only from Nazi Germany, but also from the Turkish yoke show exactly zero gratitude for the role Russia played in their liberation. To see how our so-called "Orthodox brothers" in Bulgaria, Romania or Georgia are eager to deploy NATO weapons against Russia is nothing short of sickening. The next time around, let these guys liberate themselves, everybody will be happier that way.

It is a basic rule of military analysis that you do not look at the intentions but primarily at capabilities, so let us now look at Russian capabilities.

The Russian armed forces are relatively small

First, the Russian armed forces are fairly small, especially for the defense of the biggest country on the planet (Russia is almost twice the size of the USA, she has a about half the population and land border length of 20,241km). The total size of the Russian Armed Forces is estimated at about 800,000 soldiers. That puts the Russian Armed Forces in 5th position worldwide, somewhere between the DPRK (1,190,000) and Pakistan (643,800). Truly, this kind of "bean counting" makes absolutely no sense, but this comparison is useful to show something crucial: the Russian Armed Forces are relatively small.

SakerRussia This conclusion is further bolstered if we consider the fact that it is hard to imagine a scenario in which every Russian soldier from Kalinigrad to the Kamchatka will be engaged at the same time against one enemy. This is why the Russian territory has been broken up into five separate (and, de facto, autonomous) military districts (or "strategic directions): East, Central, Northern, Western and Southern.

While there are a number of units which are subordinated directly to the high command in Moscow, most Russian units have been distributed between the commands of these strategic directions.

[Sidebar: it is also interesting to know that when Putin came to power the Western military district was almost demilitarized as nobody in Russia believed that there was a threat coming from the West. The aggressive US/NATO policies have now changed that and there now is an major program underway to strengthen it, including the reactivation of the First Guards Tank Army.]

There is no US equivalent to the Russian military districts. Or, if there is, it is very different in nature and scope. I am talking about the US Unified Combatant Commands which have broken up our entire planet into "Areas of Responsibility":

Notice that all of Russia is in the area of "responsibility" of only one of these commands, USEUCOM. In reality, however, in the case of full scale war between Russia and the United States USCENTCOM and USPACOM would, obviously, play a crucial role.

The Russians are *not* coming

The size and capabilities of the Russian Military Districts are completely dwarfed by the immense power and resources of the US Commands: in every one of these commands the USA already has deployed forces, pre-positioned equipment and built the infrastructure needed to receive major reinforcements. Furthermore, since the USA currently has about 700 military bases worldwide, the host countries have been turned into a modern version of a colony, a protectorate, which has no option than to fully collaborate with the USA and which has to offer all its resources in manpower, equipment, infrastructure, etc. to the USA in case of war. To put it simply: all of Europe is owned by the USA which can use it as they want (mainly as canon fodder against Russia, of course).

It is important to keep this immense difference in size and capabilities in mind when, for example, we look at the Russian operation in Syria.

When the first rumors of an impending Russian intervention began flooding the blogosphere many were tempted to say that the Russians were about to liberate Syria, challenge NATO and defeat Daesh. Some had visions of Russian Airborne Forces deployed into Damascus, MiG-31s criss-crossing the Syrian skies and even Russian SLBMs cruising off the Syrian coast (though they never explained this one). At the time I tried to explain that no, the "Russians are not coming" (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)), but my cautionary remarks were not greeted with enthusiasm, to put it mildly. A Russian task force did eventually materialize in Syria, but it was a very far cry from what was expected. In fact, compared to the expected intervention force, it was tiny: 50 aircraft and support personnel. What this small force achieved, however, was much more than anybody expected, including myself. So what happened here, did the Russians really do everything they can, or did they get cold feet or were they somehow pressured into a much less ambitious mission than they had originally envisioned?

To explain this, we now need to look at the actual capabilities of the Russian Armed Forces.

The true "reach" of the Russian armed forces

First, Russia does have very long range weapon systems: her missiles can reach any point on the planet, her bombers can fly many thousands of miles and her transport aircraft have a range of several thousand miles. However, and this is crucial, none of that amounts to a real power projection capability.

There are two main ways to project power: to take control over a territory or, failing that to deny it to your enemy. The first one absolutely requires the famous "boots on the ground" while the second one requires air supremacy. So how far away from home can the Russian soldiers and pilots really fight? How far from home can the Russian Aerospace forces establish a no-fly zone?

Let's begin by dispelling a myth: that Russian Airborne Forces are more or less similar to the US 82nd or 101st Airborne. They are not. The 82nd and 101st are light infantry divisions which are typically engaged in what I would call "colonial enforcement" missions. In comparison to the US airborne forces, the Russian Airborne Forces are much heavier, fully mechanized and their main mission is to fight in the operational level support of the front to a maximum depth of 100km to 300km (if I remember correctly, the Russian Aerospace Forces don't even have sufficient aircraft to airlift an entire Airborne Division although they will acquire that capability in 2017). Once landed, the Russian Airborne Division is a much more formidable force than its US counterpart: not only are the Russians fully mechanized and they have their own artillery. Most importantly, they are far more tactically mobile than the Americans.

But what the Russians gain in tactical mobility, they lose in strategic mobility: the US can easily send the 82nd pretty much to any location on the planet, whereas the Russians most definitely cannot do that with their Airborne Forces.

Furthermore, even a Russian Airborne Division is relatively weak and fragile, especially when compared to regular armed forces, so they are critically dependent on the support of the Russian Aerospace forces. That, again, dramatically reduces the "reach" of these forces. All this is to say that no, the Russian VDV never had the means to send an airborne division/Brigade/Regiment to Damascus any more than they had the means to support the Russian VDV company in Pristina. This is not a weakness of the Russian Airborne Forces, it is simply the logical consequence of the fact that the entire Russian military posture is purely defensive in nature. at least strategically.

Like any other modern military force, the Russians are capable of offensive military operations, but those would be executed primarily as a part of a defensive plan or as a part of a counter-attack. And while the Russian Ground Forces (aka "Army") have excellent terrain crossing capabilities, they are all designed for missions of less than a couple of hundred kilometers in depth.

This is why in the past I have written that the Russian Armed Forces are designed to fight on their national territory and up to a maximum of 1000km from the Russian border. Now, please do not take this "1000km" literally. In reality, 200km-400km would be much more realistic, and I would say that the capabilities of the Russian military diminish in a manner roughly inversely proportional to the square of the distance from the Russian borders. Here is what this maximal 1000km looks like on a map showing the western and southern borders of Russia:

SakerRussia-3

Keep in mind that the real distance the Russian armed forces can "reach" is not primarily determined by distance, but much more by terrain and the possible defenses encountered in this zone. Flying over Estonia to reach the Baltic Sea would be much easier than to fly over Turkey to reach Syria. It is much easier to cross the Ukrainian plains that it would be to cross the snow covered forests of Finland. Again, the conceptual 1000km distance would often be much shorter in the real world.

If we now take a closer look at the Middle-East, here is what we see:

SakerRussia-4

Notice that Khmeimin is just at the edge of this 1000km distance, but only 50km from the Turkish border and that in order to resupply it the Russians would need to either cross Turkish airspace or fly around Turkey via Iran and Iraq. In other words, Khmeimim and Damascus are way too far for the Russian armed forces to insert anything but a relatively small force and give it a relatively limited mission. And while the Russians were extremely successful in Syria, I would argue that Putin took a huge risk, even if he, and the Russian General Staff, calculated the odds correctly and achieved a truly remarkable success.

Has the recent Iranian offer to use the Hamedan airbase made a difference in Russian capabilities?

Yes and no. Yes because it will now make it possible for the Russians to use their Tu-22M3 in a much more effective way and no because this improvement does not fundamentally change the regional balance of power or allow the Russian to project their forces into Syria. To put it simply: the Russians are years away from being capable of executing something similar to what the USA did during "Desert Shield". In fact, such operations are not even part of the Russian military doctrine and the Russians have no desire to develop any such capability. There is a reason why the AngloZionist Empire is broke: maintaining a global empire is prohibitively expensive, the Russians painfully learned that lesson in the past and they have no desire to emulate the USA today. Doing so would not only require a dramatic change in the Russian military posture, but also to imitate the US political and economic model, something Russia neither desires nor is capable of.

There are, however, also big advantages to the Russian force posture, the main one being that Russians will only fight on "their turf" not only in terms of location, but also in terms of capabilities. The very same inverse square "law" which so severely limits the Russian military power projection capabilities also acts in Russia's favor when dealing with an enemy approaching the Russian border: the closer this enemy gets, the more dangerous

his environment becomes. In practical terms, this means that the three Baltic states, the Baltic Sea, the Gulf of Finland, most of the Ukraine, the Black Sea and the Caspian are all, for all practical purposes, "Russkie-land". The fact that NATO pretends otherwise makes no difference here: the kind of firepower, capabilities which Russia can bring to bear simply dwarfs what the US and NATO can commit. This is not an issue of number of tanks, or helicopters or combat aircraft, it is the fact that over and near the Russian territory the Russian armed forces would act as an integrated whole, exactly what they cannot do as far as, say, in Syria. So even if NATO can in theory bring more aircraft to the battle, Russian aircraft would be supported by the multi-layered and fully integrated Russian air defense network, a large number of sophisticated electronic warfare systems which, together with highly capable and long range interceptors: land based like the S-400 or airborne like the MiG-31BM would make it extremely dangerous for US/NATO aircraft to get anywhere near Russian airspace, especially for the AWACs the US air doctrine completely depends on.

The real meaning of A2AD

SakerRussia-5 The US and NATO are, of course, very much aware of this. And as is typically the case, they concealed this reality behind an obscure acronym: A2AD, which stands for anti-access area denial. According to US strategists, Russia, China and even Iran are plotting to use A2AD strategies against the USA. What this means in plain English is simple, of course: some countries out there actually can fight back and defend themselves (hence the burning aircraft carrier on the cover of this book). The arrogance of it all is simply amazing: it is not like the USA is concerned about Iranian A2AD in Paraguay, Russia A2AD in Africa or even Chinese A2AD in the Gulf of Mexico. No, the USA is concerned about these countries defending their own borders. Indeed, how dare they?!

Fortunately for the world, Uncle Sam only gets to whine here, but cannot do much about it except conceal these realities from the general public in the West and obfuscate the dangers of messing with the wrong countries under bizarre acronyms like A2AD. And that brings me to the Ukraine.

A quick look at 1000km map will immediately show that the Ukraine is also well within the conceptual "Russkie-land" zone (again, don't take 1000km literally, and remember that this is a maximum, a couple of hundred kilometers are much more realistic). This does not at all mean that Russia would want, or should, attack or invade the Ukraine (the the Baltic states and Poland, for that matter), but it does mean that such an operation is well within the Russian capabilities (at least if we forget about public opinion in Russia) and that to try to counter that would take a truly immense effort, something nobody in the West has the means to undertake.

In truth, those kinds of scenarios only exist in the demented minds of western propagandists and in the artificial world of US think tanks which make providing the politicians with frightening fairy tales their daily bread (for an example of the latter, see here). To be sure, the fact that both sides have long-range standoff weapons, including nuclear ones, makes such a scenario even less likely unless we assume that the Russians have gone insane and are trying to force the US to resort to nuclear weapons. The opposite scenario - the US taking the risk of forcing Russia to use her nukes - is, alas, not quite as unlikely, especially if the Neocons take full control of the White House. The difference? The Russians know that they are neither invulnerable nor invincible, the Americans don't. This is why the latter are far more likely to trigger and conflict than the former.

A full-scale war between the USA and Russia would be far different from anything described here: it would last a week, maybe two, it would involve conventional and nuclear strikes on both the USA and Russia, and it would be fought primarily with standoff weapons: "boots on the ground" or armored warfare would matter very little in such a

scenario.

The Ukraine is located well inside Russkie-land

So if in Syria the "Russians are not coming", then in the Ukraine they are already there. I am not referring to the sending of equipment (the voentorg) or volunteers (the "northern wind") but to the fact that the Ukraine and, especially, the Donbass are so close to the Russian border as being basically undeniable to the Russians should they decide to take it. Again, I am not suggesting that they will, or even that this should happen, but only that all the hot air from the regime in Kiev about "defending Europe against the Russian hordes" or "teaching NATO on how to fight the Russians" is absolute nonsense. Ditto for the talk about supplying "lethal weapons" to the Ukronazis. Why? Because the situation in the Donbass is extremely simple: it is highly unlikely that the Ukronazis would succeed in taking over the Donbass but if, by some miracle, they did, they would be destroyed by the Russian armed forces. Putin has made it abundantly clear that while he will not intervene militarily in the Ukraine, he will not allow a genocide to take place in Novorussia. Just the Russian artillery deployed along the border has the means to destroy any Ukrainian force invading Novorussia. In fact, that is exactly what happened in July of 2014 when in a single cross-border 2 minutes long fire strike by Russian multiple rocket launchers and long range artillery guns completely destroyed two Ukrainian mechanized battalions (a first in the history of warfare).

As I wrote many times, all parties to the conflict know that, and the only real goal of the Ukronazis is to trigger a Russian intervention in the Donbass, while the Russians are trying to avoid it by covertly supporting the Novorussians. That's it. It is that simple. But the notion of the Ukronazis ever getting their hands on the Donbass or, even less so, Crimea is absolutely ridiculous as even the combined power of the US and NATO could not make that happen.

Conclusion: Russia ain't the Soviet Union and it ain't the USA

It is absolutely amazing how hard it is for so many people to understand the seemingly simple fact that Russia is not a USSR v2 nor an anti-USA. It is therefore absolutely essential to repeat over and over again that the Russia of 2016 has no aspirations to become an empire and no means to become a global challenger to the AngloZionist hegemony over our planet. So what does Russia want? It is simple: Russia simply wants to be a sovereign and free country. That's it. But in a world ruled by the AngloZionist Empire this is also a lot. In fact, I would say that for the international plutocracy ruling the Empire, this Russian aspiration is completely and categorically unacceptable as it sees this Russian desire as an existential threat to the USA and the entire New World Order the Empire is trying to impose upon all of us. They are absolutely correct, by the way.

If Russia is allowed to break free from the Empire, then this means the end for the Empire's global domination project as other countries will inevitably follow suit. Not only that, but this would deprive the Empire from the immense Russian resources in energy, potable water, strategic metals, etc. If Russia is allowed to break free and succeed, then Europe will inevitably gravitate towards Russia due to objective economic and political factors. Losing Europe would mean the end of the AngloZionist Empire. Everybody understands that and this is why the ruling 1%ers have unleashed to most hysterical full-spectrum russophobic propaganda campaign in western history. So yes, Russia and the Empire are already at war, a war for survival from which only one side will walk away while the other will be eliminated, at least in its current political form. This war is a new type of war, however, one which is roughly 80% informational, 15% economic and 5% military. This is why the ban on the Russian paralympic team is every bit as important as the delivery of US and British counter-battery radars to the Nazi junta in Kiev.

If militarily and economically Russia is dramatically weaker than the US led block of all the countries forming the Empire, on the informational front Russia is doing much better. It is enough to see all the hysterics of western politicians about RT to see that they are most definitely feeling threatened in an area which they used to completely dominate: information operations (aka propaganda).

The goals of Russia are quite simple:

- a) military: to survive (defensive military doctrine)
- b) economic: to become truly sovereign (to remove the 5th columnists from power)
- c) informational: to discredit and de-legitimize the Empire political and economic basis

That's it. Unlike the grandiose hopes of those who wish to see the Russian military intervene everywhere, these 3 goals are commensurate with the actual capabilities/means of Russia.

One cannot win a war by engaging in the kind of warfare the enemy excels at. You have to impose upon him the kind of warfare you excel at. If Russia tried to "out-USA the USA" she would inevitably lose, she therefore chose to be different in order to prevail.

There are still many out there who are nostalgic for the "good old days" of the Cold War when any anti-US movement, party, regime or insurgency would automatically get the support of the USSR. These are the folks who deeply regret that Russia did not liberate the Ukraine from the Nazi junta, who fault Russia for not standing up to the USA in Syria and who are baffled, if not disgusted, by the apparently cozy relationship between Moscow and Tel Aviv. I understand these people, at least to some degree, but I also see what they plainly fail to realize: Russia is still much weaker than the AngloZionist Empire and because of that Russia will always prefer a bad peace to a good war. Besides, it is not like there was a long line of countries waiting to defend Russia when her interests were affected. Does anybody know which countries, besides Russia, have recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia? Answer: Nicaragua, Venezuela and Nauru! Yep, not even Kazakhstan or Syria... Isn't friendship and partnership a two-way street?

The truth is that Russia does not owe anything to anybody. But even more importantly, Russia does simply not have the means to engage in a planetary zero-sum game against the AngloZionist Empire. Since Vladimir Putin came to power he achieved a quasi-miracle: he made Russia into a semi-sovereign state. Yes, I wrote semi-sovereign because while Russia is militarily safe she remains economically subservient to the AngloZionist Empire. Compared to the Empire, her economy is tiny and her armed forces only capable of defending the Russian homeland. And yet, just as the tiny Russian contingent in Khmeimim achieved results way superior to anything which could have been expected from it, Russia is still the only power on the planet who dares to openly say "niet" to the AngloZionist Hegemon and but to even openly challenge and even ridicule its legitimacy and so-called 'values'.

The war between the Empire and Russia will be a long one, and its outcome will remain uncertain for many years but, as the Russian saying goes, "Russia does not start wars, she ends them". The Papacy fought against Russia for 1000 years. The Crusaders for roughly a century. The Swedish Empire for 21 years. Napoleon for just a few months. Queen Victoria, Napoleon III and Abdülmejid I (what I call the "Ecumenical Coalition against Russia") for about 3 years. The Kaiser Wilhelm II also for 3 years. The Trotskysts for a decade. Hitler for 4 years. The Jewish mobsters (aka "oligarchs") for 9 years. And yes, they all eventually were defeated, even after a temporary victory, but each time Russia paid a huge price in blood and suffering. This time around, the Russian leaders have chosen a different strategy: they try as hard as possible not to give the West a pretext for a

chosen a different strategy, they try as hard as possible not to give the West a pretext for a full-scale military confrontation. So far, this strategy has been successful and besides a two terrorist attacks (in Egypt and Syria) and a two-year long recession (apparently ending soon), Russia did not have pay the horrendous price countries at war with the West typically have had to pay. It would be delusional to expect the Russians to change course at this time, especially since time is now clearly on the Russian side. Just look at all the problems all the enemies of Russia have to which she does not have to contribute at all: the US and EU are both in a deep and potentially devastating political crisis, the US is sitting on an economic time-bomb while the EU is quite literally imploding. The Ukraine has turned into a textbook example of a failed state and is likely to break apart, while Turkey is undergoing the worst crisis since its foundation. And each passing day just makes things worse and worse for the Empire. This reminds me of the monologue of Captain Willard in the movie "Apocalypse Now": "I'm here a week now... waiting for a mission... getting softer. Every minute I stay in this room, I get weaker, and every minute Charlie squats in the bush, he gets stronger. Each time I looked around the walls moved in a little tighter". Replace Charlie with Ivan and the jungle with the taiga, and you get a pretty good picture of the dynamic taking place: every days the walls of the Empire are moving in a little tighter while the AngloZionists are completely clueless as to what to do to stop this.

Conclusion

In international affairs, as in many other areas, it is better to never say never. So I will only say that to see the Russian armed forces going into an offensive operation remains exceedingly unlikely. Nor will Russia defend even an important partner at "any cost". The primarily mission and military posture of the Russian armed forces will remain fundamentally defensive and while Russia might use her armed forces in support of a political goal or to help an ally, she will do that with extreme caution not to allow that engagement to escalate into a regional war or, even less so, a direct war against the Empire.

Unlike the West where a possible war with Russia is almost never discussed (and, when it is, it is done in an absolutely ridiculous manner), the prospects of war with the West are discussed in the Russian media on an almost daily basis, including on the main, state-funded, TV stations. As for the Russian armed forces, they are engaged in huge rearmament and force-training program which, so far, has been roughly 50% completed. These are all clear signs that Russia is preparing, very intensively, for war. Should the Neocon "crazies in the basement" trigger a war they will find Russia ready, militarily and psychologically, to fight and to win, no matter what the costs. But Russia will never again volunteer for the role of global anti-US agent or engage her armed forces if there is a viable alternative to such an engagement. So no, most definitely not, the Russians are not coming.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#26

Moskovsky Komsomolets

August 25, 2016

Russia tapes ex-MP scoffs at Ukrainian prosecutor charges

Konstantin Zatulin, director of Institute of CIS Countries: "I was then with my people, where my people, unfortunately, were". Konstantin Zatulin on the Ukrainian authorities' new attempts to lay the blame on someone else"

Ukrainian Prosecutor-General Yuriy Lutsenko was gifted by his American friends a two-year-old wiretap of phone conversations of Sergei Glazyev, adviser to the president of Russia. This new American humanitarian assistance so impressed him that at yesterday's [24 August] news conference he declared to be on the wanted list together with Glazyev a whole group of Russian generals and admirals. And me at the same time.

First I shall offer my condolences to two fraternal peoples - Ukrainian and American. I understand that one good turn deserves another, and the President Obama administration, having, thanks to its younger brothers from Kiev, won a historic victory over Paul Manafort of the hated Trump team, had to somehow share with the Cossacks the fruits of its electronics. But is this all that the comrades in arms are capable of? I feel sorry for the taxpayers.

The mountain has given birth to a mouse. But even it would not have been born if it had not resorted to the cutting, pasting, and juggling of the wiretapped material. The entire spirit of this labour consists of the conclusion formulated on its basis concerning the involvement of a group of suspects in the killing of over 2,000, and the wounding of over 8,000, Ukrainian servicemen. I would like, as a warm-up, to ask: what do these deaths and injuries have at all to do with the wiretapped words of Glazyev or his activity? Did he arm, wound, and kill or, perhaps, demand these actions of his communicants?

Next question: why have the charges against the Russian military been pinned on my or someone else's conversations with Glazyev? What part of the released material contains references or at least mentions of generals of the Russian army or, at the very least, the Black Sea Fleet?

I have absolutely no intention of justifying myself before Lutsenko, Poroshenko, and Co for being, following the coup in Kiev, in Sevastopol and Crimea. And from there - as from Moscow also, for that matter - attempting to render support for people in Ukraine, Russians and Russian speakers opposed to this coup and the subsequent horrifying acts, including the immediate cancellation of the modest guarantees for Russian in Ukraine's regions. In the wake of Akhmatova, "I was then with my people, where my people, unfortunately, were." Had I been alive in 1936, I would have been in Spain.

Sergei Glazyev and many other of my fellow-thinkers and myself formed the We Are All Berkut social fund, which rendered assistance for people who had suffered as result of the events on the Maydan and the subsequent reprisals on the part of the usurpers. In Kharkiv, Odessa, Lviv, and throughout Ukraine. I tried to do my bit in support of the right of the citizenry of Crimea to free expression - a right of which they had been deprived and which they had sought for all 23 years of Crimea being part of independent Ukraine. But you'd have to be a very cheap propagandist or prosecutor-general - which, in my view, under Ukraine's conditions are one and the same thing - to have attempted to represent the referendum in Crimea and the civil war which Kiev began in Donbass as the consequence of some directive of Glazyev or Zatulin.

The Office of the Prosecutor-General of Ukraine is endeavouring to prove that Russian power - executive and legislative - is to blame for the lamentable results of Ukrainian policy. To this end I am called with touching doggedness a member of the State Duma, although by 2014 I had not for two years been such. I was at that time and remain now director of the Institute of CIS Countries - a nongovernmental Russian organization, which, of course, reports to the tax authorities, but never to the adviser of the president of Russia.

About the adviser, Sergei Glazyev, incidentally. Our friendship will soon be 25 years old. I know well that Glazyev, a native of Zaporizhzhya, took and continues to take the events on the Maydan and the subsequent coup and rift between Russia and Ukraine as a personal tragedy. For too long he and I attempted to warn both the leaders of Ukraine of various years and the Ukrainian audience itself at large of the disastrous consequences of the abandonment of democratization, federative reforms, and Russian and of the promotion to the forefront of primitive nationalism. Yuriy Lutsenko, son of the secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine's Rivne Region Committee, who learned in the years of the "orange revolution" Bandera songs, considers fascism the internal business of independent Ukraine. Glazyev and myself do not

independent Ukraine, Glazyev and myself do not.

The Office of the Prosecutor-General of Ukraine is waiting for Glazyev, Zatulín, and all Russian generals to turn themselves in in Kiev. It won't be any time soon. It should in the meantime be undertaking major renovation or moving to better premises. Anything for a quiet life.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#27

Intellinews.com

August 29, 2016

LONG READ: Poroshenko's empire - the business of being Ukraine's president

By Graham Stack in Berlin, Sergei Kuznetsov in Kyiv, Ben Aris in Berlin

[Text with graphics here <http://www.intellinews.com/long-read-poroshenko-s-empire-the-business-of-being-ukraine-s-president-103790/?source=ukraine>]

When Ukraine's president, Petro Poroshenko, was swept into power following the Euromaidan protests two years ago, he promised to sell most of his business interests to avoid any conflicts of interest. "We are going to embed new traditions. I will make a point of selling my assets immediately after occupying the post," Poroshenko promised in the run-up to the presidential election that he won in 2014.

Yet two years later and he has sold nothing. Quite the opposite in fact; according to the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), in 2015 not only did President Poroshenko's personal fortune rise to \$858mn, he was the only one of Ukraine's wealthy businessmen to see his net worth actually increase that year.

Poroshenko, it seems, has continued building an empire centred on a holding company registered in Kyiv, called Prime Assets Capital, of which he is beneficial owner, according to the Ukrainian corporate register. Poroshenko holds 60% in International Investment Bank (not to be confused with the Moscow-based multilateral development bank of the same name) via Prime Assets Capital and directly, according to National Bank of Ukraine data. The bank acts as the financial node of a tangled web of companies and investments that is as active today as it ever was.

And Poroshenko is not acting alone. His two longstanding business associates, who hold stakes in many of his businesses, have followed him into politics, but remain key players in the Poroshenko financial-industrial group, a bne IntelliNews investigation can reveal.

Poroshenko has thus blurred the line between business and politics, deflected the anti-corruption efforts at every turn, and the businesses and politicians associated with him are flourishing at a time when Ukraine's economy is mired in its worst crisis since the country's independence in 1991.

Chocolate wars

The most valuable assets in Poroshenko's empire are his Roshen Confectionery Corporation, a chocolate maker that has attracted most of the media attention, along with his TV5 broadcaster, which Poroshenko said from the start was not going to be sold. For a sitting president to own a TV station is unorthodox to say the least, but in the political chaos following the ousting of former president Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014, the Ukrainian public and the country's international partners were prepared to overlook it.

Poroshenko did make some attempt to sell Roshen, which he valued at \$3bn, promising to "wipe the slate clean" in an interview with the German tabloid Bild: "I will and want to only focus on the wellbeing of the nation " But he has failed to follow through on that pledge

Roshen was founded in 1996 after Poroshenko merged half a dozen chocolate, cookie and cake producers that he controlled, taking the name from the middle letters of his family name. The company became Ukraine's biggest confectioner, a major player in the region and also includes factories in Russia's Lipetsk, Lithuania's Klaipeda and Budapest through the Bonbanetti Choco company. It earned \$750mn in 2014, but that fell to \$500mn in 2015 during the recent political unrest and clash with Russia in the east of the country.

But with both the country and Poroshenko's business empire under attack from Russia, it proved impossible to do a deal. "There's absolutely no way the company will sell for that much at this time," Roshen's CEO, Vyacheslav Moskalevsky, who is also a minority shareholder, said in 2015. "Nobody can sell anything here now."

Instead, Poroshenko attempted to warehouse the company by transferring ownership from Prime Assets Capital to a "blind trust" managed by Rothschild Trust (Schweiz) AG on January 14, 2016. "What does this trust foresee? First of all, during my tenure as president, neither I nor someone else can terminate this trust. Secondly, under the contract, neither my signature nor my orders have legal force," Poroshenko told reporters at a press conference in January this year.

But the blind trust story quickly began to unravel when Poroshenko got caught up in the "Panama Papers" scandal. As late as April this year, Poroshenko was still claiming that he was no longer involved in the company when the leaked documents showed he registered offshore holding companies in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) indicating he was still very much involved in the running of Roshen.

"Actions by his financial advisers and Poroshenko himself, who is worth an estimated \$858mn, make it appear that the candy magnate was more concerned about his own welfare than his country's - going so far as to arguably violate the law twice, misrepresent information and deprive his country of badly needed tax dollars during a time of war," Anna Babinets and Vlad Lavrov wrote in the OCCRP expose of Poroshenko's offshore holdings.

Poroshenko registered the offshore company Prime Asset Partners Ltd on August 21, 2014 in the BVI. The name echoes that of his Ukrainian holding company Prime Assets Capital. This lends some credence to his subsequent claims that the offshore was intended as a new ownership vehicle for the holding in the run-up to a sale to an international investor. Such a sale would have seen Poroshenko's cash from the deal stay offshore, in time-honoured Ukrainian fashion. But in the event, Ukraine's economic collapse means there were simply no buyers even for such 'tasty' assets as Roshen.

Two other firms also appearing in the Panama Papers - Linqvist Services and VIP-jet linked Intraco Management, both set up in the BVI in 2005, and Chartomena Ltd registered in Cyprus in December 2012 - also feature prominently in Poroshenko's empire, although in contrast to Prime Asset Partners Ltd his name does not feature in the paperwork. Intraco Management is owned by Serhyi Zaitsev, a top manager at Roshen, according to the Panama Papers. There is no data on the beneficial owners of Linqvist and Chartomena.

Records in Cyprus list Poroshenko as the only shareholder in Prime Asset Partners. OCCRP, which made many of the documents public, even has a scanned copy of Poroshenko's passport that was attached to the application. They give his official address in Ukraine's capital, "Kiev - apartment 39, Hrushevskoho Street". More damagingly, Prime Asset Partners was founded after Poroshenko was already president, but he failed to report the company on his income disclosure statements, which is illegal.

Mossack Fonseca records specify that Prime Asset Partners would serve as the holding

company for the Ukrainian and Cyprus companies of Roshen confectionary corporation and that Poroshenko is the sole beneficiary owner, with "proceeds from the business trade" of the corporation being its source of funds. Oleksii Khmara, executive director of Transparency International Ukraine, told OCCRP that, "this is a violation of the law, no matter what the conditions (under which it's registered) or the jurisdiction used".

Three other firms registered earlier by Poroshenko, but also appearing in the Panama Papers - Linquist Services set up in the BVI in 2005 together with his airline holding Intraco, and Chartomena Ltd registered in Cyprus in December 2012 - also feature prominently in Poroshenko's empire. Poroshenko later claimed that these offshore vehicles were part of the setting up of the blind trust, but the process has not been completed yet. But these excuses were given years after the first offshore was founded and the blind trust is clearly still not in place.

Financial spider at the centre of the web

Delving deeper into Poroshenko's empire and you quickly run across his International Investment Bank (IIB), which is the financial glue that holds the financial-industrial group together.

Poroshenko holds 60% of the bank, while his business partners, now political lieutenants, own the rest: Ihor Kononenko, deputy head of the parliamentary group of Bloc Petro Poroshenko, owns 14.9%; Oleg Gladkovsky, first deputy head of the Security Council, holds 9.9%; while Konstantin Vorushilin, head of the state Deposit Guarantee Fund, owns 5.5% via relations, according to banking open-source information compiled by the central bank. Oleh Zimin, owner of leading Ukrainian carmaker Bogdan Corporation, which Poroshenko claims to have exited, also owns 9.9%.

IIB has been a smashing, and surprising, success. Its assets rose by 85% year on year in 2015, the fourth best result among Ukraine's banks, despite the rest of the sector in a deep crisis as the economy collapsed. IIB was the 31st largest of Ukraine's 120 banks, with total assets of UAH6.1bn (\$244mn) as of April 1 - up by over a third from UAH4.7bn just six months earlier. For 2015, IIB booked UAH32.6mn (\$1.3mn) in pre-tax profit. Again, like many of the businesses linked to Poroshenko, it was one of the few in the sector to actually remain in the black during this turbulent period. In April, IIB announced the profits would go toward boosting capital by 18.6%.

Ukrainian media have branded IIB shareholder Vorushylin "the president's personal banker" - and for good reason: the 46-year-old has been part of Poroshenko's financial and business interests for half of his life and in addition to owning a stake in IIB, he was appointed head of the state agency in June that is responsible for deposits repayment when any bank in the country goes bankrupt.

Clan of Poro

Unlike the Russian financial-industrial groups, which were owned and controlled by a single man, Poroshenko's organisation actually looks more like a clan. Top of the tree are his longtime business associates Kononenko and Gladkovsky. But Poroshenko loyalists can be found scattered throughout the government, according to local investigative reporters.

Kononenko epitomizes the overlap between business and politics in today's Ukraine. He was named Poroshenko's eminence grise and the reason why the Lithuanian-born economy minister Aivaras Abromavicius quit at the start of this year after Poroshenko tried to insert Kononenko into the workings of his ministry, which is in charge of appointing management to many state enterprises. "Neither me nor my team have any desire to serve as cover for covert corruption, or become puppets for those who very much like

serve as cover for covert corruption, or become puppets for those who, very much like the 'old' government, are trying to exercise control over the flow of public funds... These people have names. Particularly, I would like to name one today: the name is Igor Kononenko," Abromavicius said in his resignation speech.

Serhiy Leshchenko, Ukrainska Pravda's star investigative reporter and now a member of Ukraine's parliament, elected in October 2014 as a deputy in Bloc Petro Poroshenko, recently released a Phillipic against his own party and president, accusing them of widespread corruption. "Instead of fighting against the oligarchs, the government forces them to make concessions and to share. As a result, the system is not being cleansed. The flows of money are simply being redistributed in the interests of the presidential clan," Leshchenko wrote.

Leshchenko went on to name names in ministries, state-owned companies and the regional administration that he claims are working for the president and not for the Ukrainian people. And like Abromavicius, he named Kononenko as the kingpin of the new system. "For instance, this is the case with the company Centerenergo where a lawmaker from Poroshenko's Bloc, Serhiy Trehubenko, being close to the top, is responsible for the coal supply schemes. For the second year in a row, the privatization of the company has been disrupted in spite of the interest shown by the large French company, Gaz de France," Leshchenko wrote, before reeling off a litany of other abuses.

The bottom line, Leshchenko concludes, is that corruption in Ukraine is deep rooted and endemic. But rather than attempting to root it out, Poroshenko is deeply invested into such a system and is simply trying to turn it to his and his clan's advantage.

Cold fusion

Poroshenko, the 50-year-old Kononenko and 50-year-old Gladkovsky are joined at the financial hip. All three men are connected by their links to an asset management company called Fusion Capital Partners, as it manages the main part of all three of their businesses, a bne IntelliNews investigation can reveal.

On paper, Prime Assets Capital, a Ukrainian-registered version of the Poroshenko holding company, is run by the nominally independent Kyiv-based Fusion Capital Partners. However, publicly available information raises flags over its true ownership. Two little-known individuals control almost 19% of Fusion Capital Partners, while another 10% is owned by the little-known Ocean Invest Company, registered in Kyiv.

A 72% stake of Fusion Capital Partners "is owned by the company itself", according to the asset management firm's 2015 audit report, seen by bne IntelliNews. However, the document states that the company "should sell this stake to other shareholders or third parties within one year [by the end of 2016]".

Kononenko was one of Poroshenko's first business partners in the 1990s, and in 2014 he was made first deputy head of the Poroshenko Bloc parliamentary faction after Poroshenko took office, answering to directly to the president. Kononenko conducts most of the inter-parliamentary faction negotiations acting on Poroshenko's behalf.

Gladkovsky studied together with Kononenko in the Kyiv-based Auto-Transport Institute, and currently occupies the post of deputy secretary of Ukraine's National Defence Council.

Fusion Capital Partners also manages Kononenko's asset fund VIK and a similar structure owned by Gladkovsky, SOVA. However, both funds have refused to disclose their portfolios, as is the case with Poroshenko.

Fusion Capital Partners, Poroshenko's Prime Assets Capital and the funds of his two allies

are all registered at the same address in Kyiv, on Elektrykiv Street, leading some to speculate that all these companies are merely fronts for the three men who are the ultimate beneficiary owners of all the firms' assets.

Jet propelled

According to a source with knowledge of IIB's business, the lion's share of the bank's clients are from Poroshenko's Roshen Confectionary Corporation, associated offshore firms and industrial companies that were formerly part of his Ukrprominvest industrial holding company, founded by Poroshenko and his crew.

Apart from Roshen, amongst the bank's 15 biggest depositors are those two Poroshenko-linked offshore companies, whose names came up in connection with the Panama Papers leak: the BVI firm Linquist Services and Cyprus firm Chartomena.

According to Austrian investigative journalists, in 2010-11 Raiffeisen Bank issued \$115mn in loans to the Roshen concern secured by a guarantee from Linquist. Likewise, a \$12.7mn loan made to major Ukrainian newspaper concern UMH, at the time owned by Boris Lozhkin, now Poroshenko's head of administration, was also collateralised by Linquist. According to experts quoted in the investigation, such loans resemble the back-to-back loans that are frequently used to disguise transactions typical in money-laundering operations.

IIB is also intimately involved with Roshen's Russian factory based in Lipetsk. Among the top-10 IIB depositors is Cyprus firm Chartomena. Since 2014, Chartomena has also owned the Russian producer Krakhmaloprodukty based in Russia's Lipetsk, where Roshen's Russian subsidiary is also based. Chartomena was set up in 2012 and is owned by UK firm Morewig Ltd, a structure of the Ergofinance company that is basically a shell company factory used to create the multitude of offshore holdings used by the Poroshenko's empire to organise its offshore life.

Roshen and affiliates make up the largest part of IIB's deposits, but unusually they barely feature on its loan book, which suggests strongly that the funding for this gigantic enterprise is coming via offshore structures that was partly revealed in the Panama Papers leak.

Another BVI firm established simultaneously with Linquist was Poroshenko's Intraco Management, also set up in 2005, and is the offshore vehicle associated with his private Ukrainian jet business called Business Airline that is used to collect the payments. Ironically, this airline provided private jets to fly some of the Yanukovich cronies into exile after the massacre of protestors on Kyiv's streets in February 2014, which forced the ex-president out of office. Business Airlines, set up in Ukraine in 2002, is in turn the largest borrower on IIB's books, but Intraco itself does not feature as a client of the bank. Intraco is owned on paper by a top Poroshenko lieutenant, deputy CEO of Roshen Serhii Zaitsev, according to files found by journalists among the Panama Papers.

IIB declined to comment on any of these details uncovered in the bne IntelliNews investigations, referring to banking confidentiality. "My question is about the legality of the information got by you and its source of origin," Ihor Kononenko told bne IntelliNews when presented with the findings of our investigation.

Buses to tanks

The classic feature of Russian oligarchs' financial-industrial groups in the 1990s was their ability to tap into state money and put public funds to work on their own behalf. There is no indication that any of the firms associated with Poroshenko have access to public money, but many of the same firms have recently started winning an awful lot of state tenders

but many of the same firms have recently started winning an awful lot of state tenders.

The remnants of his once mighty Ukrprominvest industrial empire now mostly depends on state orders, not least in supplying Ukraine's war effort against the Russian-backed separatists and Russian troops in the Donbas region.

The Bogdan car plant at Cherkassk is Ukraine's biggest carmaker, which was also run by Poroshenko ally Gladkovsky between 2012 and 2015. Poroshenko used to have a stake in Bogdan, but in May 2013 he said in an interview with Forbes Ukraine that he had exchanged his stake for Gladkovsky's shares in Roshen. However, the claim cannot be independently verified, as the identity of the corporation's final beneficial owner is missing from the state register of legal entities, run by Ukraine's Justice Ministry, which is a violation of law.

And Poroshenko has never actually ever outed himself as owner of Bogdan; when bne IntelliNews interviewed Gladkovsky in 2010, the official line was only that Poroshenko "takes an active interest in the business".

The plant opened in 2008 and was designed to turn out up to 150,000 cars per year, but now has entirely ceased car production after domestic demand collapsed. The company booked net losses of UAH811mn (\$32.6mn) in 2015, according to the company's financials. But recently, the company's fortunes have begun to look up again after it switched its focus to making military vehicles. Now it produces army trucks on a licence from Belarus producer MAZ and various armoured patrol vehicles for the war effort, according to press releases. While the firm was still loss-making in 2015, its losses were already 25% less than the year before.

Sister company Bogdan Industriya, also an IIB client, won UAH81mn (\$1.55mn) in orders this year to supply vehicles to Ukraine's National Guard and also to state oil pipeline operator Ukrtransnafta, according to the database of the anti-corruption website monitoring state tenders, Anti-Corruption Monitor (ACM).

Bogdan's Lutsk plant produces buses and trolleybuses for mostly state-owned public transport services. Bogdan Motors won a tender worth UAH535mn (\$21.4mn) to supply buses to municipalities and government institutions in 2015-16, also according to ACM.

Bogdan-linked Ukrzapchastina, one of the biggest borrowers on the IIB books, a supplier of vehicle parts, won over 300 state tenders in 2015-16 with a total value of over UAH300mn (\$12mn). Another IIB client, aviation company Kii Avia, in which Poroshenko formerly held a stake, supplied just under UAH50mn (\$2mn) in services to the military, the foreign ministry and other state institutions in 2015-16.

None of these deals is especially huge and the ticket size will not propel anyone into oligarch status. Moreover they could be justified, as all these companies are serious players in their various markets. But the owner of the Kremenchuk Automobile Plant, Kostyantyn Zhevago, is angry - his automotive parts business sells in more than 80 countries around the world, but he has been unable to obtain permission to sell on the domestic market. He complained in a recent interview with bne IntelliNews: "The orders instead are made to the Cherkasy plant, Bogdan, which produces primitive screwdrivers used to assemble the Belarusian MAZ."

Milk, bread and sugar

Poroshenko's agricultural holdings are also doing very nicely from state orders. In June, Ukraine's Ministry of Agrarian Policy published its quotas for sugar production and supplies to the domestic market for local enterprises in the marketing years 2016-17.

Two plants located in the Vinnytsia region - Zorya Podillya and Podillya - came out at the top of the list with significantly larger quotas than their rivals (102,400 and 113,400 tonnes respectively, which is 13% of the total amount for all Ukrainian companies). Both companies are owned by Poroshenko.

The man responsible for allocating the quotas is the newly appointed agriculture minister, Taras Kutovy, who was handpicked to serve in the new government in April by Poroshenko as part of the presidential party's quota for choosing ministers in the new cabinet.

Adding to the rank smell of the quota allocation decision is the fact that Poroshenko's son was returned as a lawmaker for a seat in the region of Vinnytsia in 2014. He was on the board of Podillya as deputy general director for foreign relations, according to Ukrainian parliament's official information.

Zorya Podillya and Podillya are the core enterprises of Poroshenko's Ukrprominvest-Agro conglomerate, which is also owned by Prime Assets Capital. It produces beef, sugar and grain, as well as controlling various processing plants. The butter-milk plant Bershadmoloko in this group also supplies Roshen's plants with dairy raw materials to make chocolate and is also part of the business.

In 2015 the conglomerate was ranked as Ukraine's fourth largest agricultural concern, as well as one of the country's top-five largest flour exporters.

The situation with Poroshenko's shipyard companies is very similar. Prime Assets Capital controls a 82.5% stake in Kyiv-based shipyard Leninska Kuznya and Kononenko's VIK fund owns another 11.5% stake, according to the Stock Market Infrastructure Development Agency.

Also an IIB client, Leninska Kuznya has recently switched production to small armed coastal-patrol boats intended as the core of a new navy. According to ACM, it won tenders totalling nearly UAH50mn (\$2mn) in 2015 and 2016 for four boats, in addition to two boats already delivered in 2014.

And like the car business, Leninska Kuznya is in financial difficulties, with net losses of UAH5.54mn (\$200,000) in 2015. But again, like the car business, this loss was much reduced from the previous year - 83% less - after the shipyard switched to producing military craft and won a number of fat state contracts. "Any country can be independent as long as there is ship construction and military modernisation," Gladkovsky told workers at the yard shortly after the state contract was awarded to Leninska Kuznya.

According to the Ukrainian cabinet, up to 20 additional military vessels should be constructed by 2020, which could provide extra business opportunities for the shipyard and its owners.

Poroshenko had a second shipyard in Sevastopol, but he lost that when the Russians annexed the Crimean peninsular in March 2015. The company has since been taken over by Russia's state-owned shipbuilding company Zvezdochka and is supposed to be modernized. The Ukrainian president has never commented on the fate of the shipyard.

IIB clients doing well

All said and done, the tens of millions of dollars in tenders that have been won by these companies is not going to make anyone super rich. And while many of these deals are slightly iffy thanks to Poroshenko's ownership of the group, are all justifiable in theory.

A lot more worrying is the raft of deals by a slew of IIB clients with no previously known affiliation to the president, but which have come out of nowhere to do very well for

animation to the president, but which have come out of nowhere to do very well for themselves thanks to public tenders since Poroshenko came to power.

One of the bank's top-30 largest depositors is a company called TOV Biznespostavka, which literally means "business supplies". The problem with this firm is that it barely seems to exist. The company was only founded in October 2014 by an obscure Donetsk businessmen, according to public records. It does not answer its telephone number. It lacks a website. And there are no offices at its present registered address. And yet it has hit the state tenders jackpot: in 2015-16 it won 232 tenders worth a total UAH225mn (\$9mn), predominantly for Ukrtransgaz, which operates Ukraine's massive and politically sensitive international gas pipelines - traditionally the most corrupt part of the Ukrainian economy. In its first year of operation, Biznespostavka was the ninth largest supplier to Ukrtransgaz, while also supplying equipment to Ukraine's state-owned railways.

Adding to the intrigue, according to details of a criminal investigation contained in Ukraine's online litigation database, Biznespostavka was part of an alleged chain of sham firms used to defraud the authorities of VAT by engaging in fictitious contracts with real firms.

Numerous other IIB clients with no visible ownership link to Poroshenko are also significant suppliers to the state sector. There is TOV Artek-Soyuz, a major supplier of rations to the army, which won just under UAH900mn (\$36mn) in tenders to supply rations to the army in 2015-16, according to ACM. One of Artek-Soyuz's competitors in tenders, PP Balansovoe Kharchovane, is also a client of IIB.

Another significant supplier to Ukraine's defence and health ministries is also present on the books of IIB - pharmaceuticals company Farmplaneta, which won over 300 tenders in 2015-16 totalling over UAH200mn (\$8mn).

TOV Akku-Energo, another IIB client, supplied around UAH125mn (\$5mn) of accumulator cells from foreign manufacturers to Ukrtransgaz and power generation companies in 2015-16.

A further cluster of IIB clients account between them for up to UAH100mn (\$4mn) in supplies to the state in 2015-16: Ukrainskii Avtobus, Dozor Avto, Ukrsplyv, Evroterm Technology, Naftogaz-Allyans, Kompaniya Interlogos, BNKh Ukraina, and more besides.

Other IIB clients have longstanding business relations with state companies dating back over a decade. The president's bank also holds deposits for state publishing company Pressa Ukrainy, which is owned directly by the presidential property department and is one of the country's main printing houses. The billing department of Kyivvodokanal, the Kyiv water utility, also holds funds at IIB. According to statements made by Kyivvodokanal, the company has deposits across many banks, and IIB has the advantage that it can provide sophisticated automatic mass clearance of payments.

IIB emerges as a pivot in a sprawling empire of firms that are owned by, or tied to, President Poroshenko directly. A second circle of clients of the bank have no ties to Poroshenko or his clan, but sport distinctly dodgy reputations. It seems that IIB has not been very careful when doing its "know-your-customer" due diligence. Given the bank's owner, that reflects back on the president.

A number of IIB clients are currently under criminal investigation, according to public sources. These include TOV ESU, at the time the local subsidiary of Viennese investment company EPIC. ESU acquired Ukraine's national fixed-line provider Ukrtelekom at a controversial privatisation auction in February 2011 for \$1.3bn, before selling the company on to oligarch Rinat Akhmetov in 2013 for an undisclosed sum. EPIC claimed to be acting independently during the privatisation, although many critics of the deal alleged that it was actually a vehicle for the Yanukovich administration.

Prosecutors have now opened an investigation into TOV ESU on account of the company's failure to implement one of the main terms of privatisation: to spin off and return to state ownership the militarily strategic communications network.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

#28

Government.ru

August 29, 2008

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin interviewed by the German ARD TV channel
"We are not going to play by some special rules of our own. We want everyone to follow the same rules that are also referred to as international law."

Thomas Roth: Mr Prime Minister,

After the escalation of tensions in Georgia, the Western public and politicians, as well as the press and other people, believe that you have set Russia against the whole world.

Vladimir Putin: Who do you think started the war?

Roth: The final trigger was Georgia's attack on Tskhinvali.

Putin: Thank you for this answer. It is true. This is exactly what happened. We will talk about this in more detail later, but for now I just want to point out that it wasn't us who created this situation.

And now about Russia's reputation. I firmly believe that the reputation of any country which is capable of defending the life and dignity of its citizens, and can conduct independent foreign policy will only improve in mid- and long-term perspective.

To the contrary, the reputation of those countries which cater to the foreign policy interests of other states at the expense of their own national interests will go down regardless of how they explain their actions.

Roth: You did not say why you decided to put you country at isolation.

Putin: I thought I had replied to this question. But if you want me to explain this in more detail, I'll do this.

I believe that a country, Russia in this case, which can defend the honour and dignity of its citizens, protect their lives, and fulfill its international legal commitments under the peacekeeping mandate, will not find itself in isolation, no matter what our partners in Europe or the United States may think, expressing their bloc mentality. Europe and the United States are not the whole world, for that matter.

And vice versa, I want to emphasize that if some countries believe that they can ignore their own national interests to cater to the foreign policy interests of other states, their prestige in the world will gradually go down no matter how they may explain their position.

In this context, if European countries want to cater to U.S. foreign policy interests, I don't think that they stand to gain anything.

Now let's take our international legal commitments. Under the international agreements, the Russian peacekeepers are committed to protect the population of South Ossetia.

And now let's recall Bosnia in 1995. As we know well, the European peacekeeping contingent, represented by the Dutch troops, did not want to get involved with one of the attacking sides, and allowed it to destroy a whole village. Hundreds of people were killed or injured. The tragedy in Srebrenica is well known in Europe.

Would you have wanted us to do the same? To leave and allow the Georgian troops to kill people in Tskhinvali?

Roth: Your critics say that Russia's goal was not to protect the civilians of Tskhinvali but to remove President Saakashvili from power, and further destabilise Georgia, and thus to prevent it from joining NATO. Is that true?

Putin: No, that is not true. That is just twisting the facts. It is a lie.

If this had been our goal we would probably have started this conflict ourselves. But as you said yourself, this conflict was started by Georgia.

Now I'd like to recall some facts from recent history. After the unlawful decision to recognize Kosovo, everyone expected Russia to respond by recognizing the independence and sovereignty of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This is true, this is how it was. Everyone was waiting for Russia's decision. And we had the moral right to make it but we did not. We were more than restrained. I don't even want to comment on it. In truth, we "swallowed" it.

And what did we get in return? An escalation of the conflict, an attack on our peacekeepers, and an attack and killings of civilians in South Ossetia. You know what happened there, all these facts have already been published.

The French Foreign Minister visited North Ossetia and met with the refugees. Eye-witnesses say that Georgian army units ran over women and children with their tanks, drove people into houses and burned them alive. When Georgian troops captured Tskhinvali, they in passing threw grenades into the basements where women and children took shelter. What was it if not genocide?

Now a few words about the Georgian leadership. The people who have brought their country to the brink of a catastrophe - and with their actions the Georgian leaders have undermined Georgia's territorial integrity and statehood - I believe that these people have no right to govern any country, big or small. If they had any decency, they would have resigned immediately.

Roth: This is not your decision; it is Georgia's decision.

Putin: Absolutely, although we also know about other precedents.

Let's recall how U.S. troops entered Iraq and what they did to Saddam Hussein for destroying several Shiite villages. And here, in the first hours of hostilities ten Ossetian villages were completely destroyed, wiped off the face of the Earth.

Roth: Mr Prime Minister, do you think this gives you the right to invade a sovereign country, not to remain in the conflict zone but to bomb its territory? I sit here next to you only by sheer luck because a bomb from your aircraft exploded in Gori's residential area just a hundred meters away from me. Doesn't your de facto occupation of a small country violate international law? What gives you this right?

Putin: Of course, we have the right to do this...

Roth: Let me specify once again - the bomb was dropped on a residential building.

Putin: Of course, we acted in line with international law. For us, the attacks on our peacekeeping posts, and the murder of our peacekeepers and our citizens were tantamount to an attack on Russia.

Georgian troops killed several dozen of our peacekeepers in the first hours of hostilities. Their tanks surrounded our base Yuzhny (we had Yuzhny and Severny peacekeepers' bases) and opened direct fire at it.

When our peacekeepers tried to get equipment out of a shed, a Grad rocket hit them. Ten people in the shed were instantly killed. They burned alive.

I haven't finished yet. Then Georgian aviation bombed several targets in South Ossetia, not in Tskhinvali but in the centre of South Ossetia. We were forced to start suppressing fire control positions beyond the zone of hostilities and beyond the security belt. But it was from these positions that the troops were receiving their orders, and strikes were being dealt at the Russian troops and peacekeepers.

Roth: I've already said that residential areas were bombed. Perhaps, you don't know all the facts?

Putin: Perhaps, I don't know everything. Mistakes can occur during hostilities.

For instance, just now the U.S. aviation killed almost a hundred civilians by striking ostensibly at the Taliban. This is one possibility, but another is more likely. The Georgian side sometimes deployed fire and aviation control points and radars in residential areas to limit our use of aircraft. They were using civilians, including you, as hostages.

Roth: Bernard Kouchner, the Foreign Minister of France, which now presides over the EU, recently expressed concern that a new conflict may break out in Ukraine, notably the Crimea and Sevastopol, a Russian naval base. Are the Crimea and Sevastopol the next target for Russia?

Putin: You said, "the next target". We did not have a target in this conflict, so I think it is simply inappropriate to speak about some "next target". This is my first point.

Roth: So you rule this out?

Putin: If you let me finish, you will be satisfied with my answer.

The Crimea is not a disputed territory. Unlike the case of Georgia and South Ossetia, there has been no ethnic conflict there.

Russia has long recognized the borders of today's Ukraine. By and large, we have completed our talks on the border. Now we have to deal with the demarcation, but this is a technical issue.

I think that asking a question about Russia's targets of this kind reeks of provocation.

There are complicated processes going on in society in the Crimea. There are problems of the Crimean Tatars, the Ukrainian population, the Russian population, the Slavic population in general, but this is Ukraine's domestic political problem.

We have an agreement with Ukraine on stationing our fleet there until 2017, and we will be guided by it.

Roth: Another Foreign Secretary, Mr Miliband of the UK, has recently voiced his concerns over the start of the new Cold War and a new arms race. What do you think about this situation? Are we on the threshold of a new Ice Age, a new Cold War and a new arms race? What do you think?

Putin: There's this joke: Whoever is the first to cry "Stop the thief" is the one who is guilty.

Roth: The British Foreign Secretary.

Putin: These are your words, not mine. Excellent. It's a pleasure talking with you. But these were your words.

Speaking seriously, Russia does not want to aggravate relations with anyone. We don't want any tensions. We want a good, friendly partnership with everyone.

If you let me, I'll tell you what I think on this score. There used to be the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. There used to be Soviet troops in the GDR. And we must honestly admit that they were occupation troops, which remained in Germany after WWII under the guise of allied troops. Now these occupation troops are gone, the Soviet Union has collapsed, and the Warsaw Pact is no more. There is no Soviet threat, but NATO and U.S. troops are still in Europe. What for?

A foreign threat is useful to put things in order in one's own camp, to make one's allies follow the bloc discipline. Iran does not fit this role too well, and it is very tempting to revive Russia's image of the enemy. But nobody in Europe is afraid anymore.

Roth: A meeting of the EU Council opens in Brussels on Monday. They will talk about Russia, about sanctions against it. In any event, these issues will be discussed. What do you think about all that? You don't care? You still believe that the European Union speaks in very many languages?

Putin: It would be a lie to say that we don't care. Of course, we do care.

Of course, we will closely follow what is taking place there. We are simply hoping that common sense will prevail. We are hoping for an objective rather than politicised assessment of events in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

We are hoping that the actions of the Russian peacekeepers will be supported and that the criminal actions of the Georgian side will be denounced.

Roth: In this context, I'd like to ask you how you are going to resolve the following dilemma. On the one hand, Russia is interested in further cooperation with the EU. Otherwise, it cannot reach its economic goals. On the other hand, Russia wants to play by its own, Russian rules. So, on the one hand, there is commitment to European common goals, but on the other, a resolve to play by the Russian rules. But you can't do both at the same time.

Putin: You know, we are not going to play by some special rules of our own. We want everyone to follow the same rules that are also referred to as international law. But we do not want anyone to manipulate with these notions.

We'll use one set of rules in one region, and another in another region, as long as it promotes our national interests.

We want to have standard rules which will take into account the interests of all participants in international relations.

Roth: Are you saying that in different parts of the world the EU plays by different rules

Roth: Are you saying that in different parts of the world the EU plays by different rules, which do not correspond to international law?

Putin: Absolutely. How was Kosovo recognized? They forgot about the territorial integrity of a state, as well as UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which they had themselves adopted and supported. Why could it have been done there, but not in Abkhazia and South Ossetia? Why not?

Roth: In other words, Russia is the only arbiter of international law. Everyone else is being manipulated, and they are not aware of this. They either have different interests, or they do not care. Have I understood you correctly?

Putin: No, you have not. Have you accepted Kosovo's independence? Yes or no?

Roth: I personally... I'm a journalist.

Putin: I meant the Western countries.

Roth: Yes.

Putin: They have recognized it for the most part.

But you have recognized it there, then also recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. There is no difference, no difference at all in these positions. Any difference would be far-fetched.

They had an ethnic conflict there, and they also had it here. Crimes were committed by both sides there, and we could also find them here.

If we make a real effort, we can probably find them.

There it was decided that these nations cannot live in one and the same state, and here they do not want to live in the same state.

There is no difference whatsoever, and everyone understands this. This is all idle talk to cover up illegal decisions. This is the law of strength, or fist law. Russia will never accept that.

Mr Roth, you have lived in Russia for a long time. You speak wonderful Russian, almost without an accent. It is no surprise that you have understood me. I'm very happy about that. But I would also like your and my European colleagues to understand me when they meet on September 1 to think over this conflict.

Did they adopt Resolution 1244? Yes, they did. It provided for Serbia's territorial integrity. Now it has been thrown out and forgotten. They have made attempts to twist and turn it but this is not possible. Have they forgotten all about it? Why? The White House issued an order and it was carried out.

If European countries continue to behave like this, we will have to discuss European affairs with Washington.

Roth: I understand what you are saying. Can we talk without an interpreter?

Putin: Sure.

Roth: Thank you. I would like to ask you about Russian-German relations regardless of the existing assessments. But given our special relations, can Germany play the role of a

mediator?

Putin: We have very good relations with Germany, very trustworthy, both in politics and in the economy.

When we talked with Mr Sarkozy during his visit to Moscow, we told him directly that we are not going to annex any part of the Georgian territory, and that we will leave the positions which we are now occupying. But we will remain in the security zone which was envisaged by existing international agreements. We are not going to be there forever. We believe that this is Georgian territory. Our only goal is to guarantee security in this region, not to allow another secret concentration of troops and equipment, as it happened this time, and to prevent another armed conflict.

In this context I can say that we will only welcome the participation of international observers, observers from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), including those from Germany. All we have to do is agree on the principles of joint work.

Roth: Does this mean that you will withdraw the troops in any event?

Putin: Absolutely. For us the main aim is to guarantee security in this area. At the next stage, we have to help South Ossetia to secure its borders. And then we will have no grounds to stay in this security zone. In the course of this work we will also welcome cooperation with the European agencies, and the OSCE.

Roth: What can you do to resolve the current crisis of relations (with the United States and Europe)?

Putin: First, I have already spoken about this with your colleagues from CNN. I think that this crisis has been largely provoked, in particular, by our American friends during the election campaign. This is certainly the use of the administrative resource, in its most deplorable form, for giving an advantage to one of the nominees, in this case, to the nominee of the ruling party.

Roth: Do you have facts to prove this?

Putin: We have analysed the situation. We know that there were many American advisors there. Equipping one side of an ethnic conflict and then prodding it to resolve its ethnic problems by force of arms is a very bad policy. At first glance it seems to be a much easier solution than to conduct talks for many years and to search for a compromise. But this policy is very dangerous, as the development of events showed.

Instructors or "teachers" in the broad sense of this word, all this personnel which trains soldiers to work with the supplied equipment, where should they be? They should be at testing grounds and at training centres. But where were they? They were in the combat area.

This alone goes to show that the U.S. leadership were aware of the planned military action, and, moreover, probably took part in it because U.S. citizens have no right to be in a combat without permission of their leadership. Only local residents, OSCE observers and peacekeepers had the right to be there whereas we found traces of U.S. citizens, who did not fit into any of these three categories. This poses a question: Why did U.S. top leadership allow its citizens to be in the area, where they had no right to be? If they allowed this, I suspect this was done for a purpose - to organise a small victorious war. And if the attempt failed, Russia could be portrayed as the enemy, and the voters could be rallied round one of the presidential nominees. I mean, of course, the candidate from the ruling party, because only a ruling party can have such a resource.

party, because only a ruling party can have such a resource.

This is my line of thought and my assumptions. It is up to you whether to accept them or not. But they have a right to exist because we have discovered traces of U.S. citizens in the combat area.

Roth: Here is my last question, which is of great interest to me. Don't you think that you are personally trapped by your authoritarian state? In the existing system, you receive information from your secret services, you get information from different sources, including top economic ones. But even the media are sometimes afraid to say something different from what you may wish to hear.

Isn't the system created by you now preventing you from taking a broad view at the current

Putin: Mr Roth, you have described our political system as authoritarian. In the course of our discussion today, you have mentioned common values several times. Where are these values?

There are some fundamental principles, for instance the right to live. The United States, for instance, has capital punishment and we don't. You don't have it in Europe, either. European and American values do not fully coincide. Will this motivate you to quit NATO?

Or take the conflict that we are discussing now. Aren't you aware of what has been happening in Georgia in these past few years? Prime Minister Zhvania's mysterious death; the crackdown on the opposition; violent dispersal of opposition rallies; the conduct of national elections in what was almost an emergency situation. Finally, this criminal action in Ossetia, involving many human losses. And this is, certainly, a democratic country with which others should maintain dialogue, and which should be accepted into NATO, and possibly even the EU.

But if another country protects its interests, simply its citizens' right to live when they have been attacked... We had 80 deaths immediately. All in all, 2,000 civilians died. And we have no right to protect them there? Or, if we protect our lives, we will be deprived of sausage? What is our choice? Between sausage and life? We choose life, Mr Roth.

Now about one more value - the freedom of the press. Look at how these events are covered by the U.S. press, this torch of democracy, and also in the European press for that matter.

I was in Beijing when these events started. The city of Tskhinvali was subjected to massive shelling, Georgian troops started ground operations, there were numerous losses but nobody said a word. Your channel said nothing, the American media said nothing. There was total silence, as if nothing was happening. But when the aggressor was hit in the face, when he got his teeth knocked out, when he abandoned all his American weapons and fled as fast as he could, everyone suddenly remembered international law and the evil Russia.

Everybody instantly started wailing.

Now let me say a few words about sausage, about the economy. We want normal economic relations with all of our partners. We are a very reliable partner. We have never let anyone down.

When we were building a pipeline system to the Federal Republic of Germany in the early 1960s, our overseas partners also advised the Germans against this project. I'm sure you're aware of that. But then the German leaders made the right decision, and the system was built in cooperation with the Soviet Union. Now it is one of the reliable sources of

hydrocarbons for the German economy. Germany receives 40 billion cubic meters of gas every year. It received it last year, and it will receive it this year. We guarantee this.

Now let's take a broader view at the matter. What is the structure of our exports to European countries and North America? More than 80% of these resources are raw materials: oil, gas, petrochemicals, timber, different metals, and chemical fertilizer. This is what the economy in Europe and the rest of the world badly needs. These products are very much in demand in the world markets.

We also have opportunities in the high-tech field but for the time being they are very limited. Moreover, despite our existing agreements with the EU, for instance, on nuclear fuel supplies, we are being kept away from the European market for no reason. Incidentally, this is because of the position of our French partners. But they know about this, we have had many debates with them on this score.

But if someone wants to disrupt these contacts, there is nothing we can do about it. We don't want this to happen.

We are hoping very much that our partners will fulfill their commitments as we have been and intend to do in the future.

These were our exports. As for your exports, that is, our imports, Russia is a very reliable and big market. I don't remember the figure but, for example, the German machine-building industry has been increasing its supplies to Russia every year. These supplies are huge. Does someone want to discontinue these supplies? We'll buy from somebody else. But I don't understand who needs this?

We are urging an unbiased analysis of the current situation. We are hoping that common sense and justice will prevail.

We are a victim of aggression, and we count on the support of our European partners.

Roth: Please accept my sincere gratitude for this interview, Mr Prime Minister.

Putin: Many thanks.

[\[return to Contents\]](#)

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