

# New eruption of political warfare in Washington focuses on Jared Kushner's meetings with Russians

By Barry Grey  
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As President Donald Trump returned to Washington from his nine-day foreign trip, the political warfare between his administration and sections of the intelligence establishment allied with the Democratic Party erupted once again, with the focus shifting to Trump's son-in-law and top adviser, Jared Kushner.

The new turn in the conflict between the fascistic president and his cabinet of oligarchs and generals, on the one side, and state forces opposed to Trump's supposed "softness" toward Russia, on the other, comes the same week that the White House released a budget proposal calling for \$1.7 trillion in social cuts, including the virtual destruction of Medicaid, the government health program for the poor.

This declaration of war on the working class was relegated within days to the background by the Democratic Party and the bulk of the corporate-controlled media, underscoring the fact that the conflict within the political establishment has no democratic content and nothing in common with the opposition to Trump among working people and youth.

There is little that separates the Democrats from Trump when it comes to savage cuts in social programs and new windfalls for the rich. The Democrats' chief concern is to preempt the emergence of mass opposition to Trump and divert social anger behind the drive of US imperialism to subordinate Russia to Washington's drive for domination of Eurasia.

The escalation of the campaign against Trump coincides with his failure at the Brussels summit to clearly affirm support for NATO and its military-strategic offensive against Russia, and his attack on Germany at the G7 meeting in Italy. These actions were roundly condemned by media outlets that

have been leading the attack on the Trump White House, particularly the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

On Sunday, the interview programs were dominated by allegations, first published Friday by the *Post*, that Kushner, at a December 2016 meeting with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak, proposed the establishment of a back channel for communications between Russian military officials and the Trump transition team. According to the *Post*, the idea was to allow Trump's chief national security adviser at the time, retired Gen. Michael Flynn, to discuss with confidentiality options for collaboration between the two countries in the Syrian war as well as other sensitive issues.

Citing unnamed officials who had reviewed US intercepts of communications between Kislyak and Moscow, the newspaper reported that the Russian ambassador told his superiors that Kushner had suggested the talks utilize secure Russian facilities. The back channel was never established, however.

Even as the *Post*, followed by the *New York Times* and most of the print and broadcast media, sought to portray this proposal as an extraordinary and sinister breach of diplomatic and political norms, the newspaper acknowledged: "The State Department, the White House National Security Council and US intelligence agencies all have the ability to set up secure communications with foreign leaders, though doing so for a transition team would be unusual."

The Democratic Party and elements within the intelligence apparatus seized on the press reports to escalate their anti-Russian campaign and suggest that Kushner, if not Trump himself, had committed treason.

The Democratic National Committee issued a statement declaring: “Trump has no choice but to immediately fire Kushner, whose failure to report this episode on his security clearance is reason enough for a criminal investigation. The next question is whether the president authorized this, because no one stands between Trump and Kushner in the chain of command.”

Susan Hennessey, a national security fellow at the Democratic-aligned Brookings Institution and former National Security Agency lawyer, wrote: “Hard to fully convey the gravity of this... Unthinkable Kushner could stay in the White House... The most significant question seems to be whether Trump was aware of and/or directed Jared and Flynn’s contacts w/Kislyak.”

Michael Hayden, former director of the CIA and NSA and a prominent Trump critic, told CNN on Saturday: “This is off the map. I know of no other experience like this in our history, certainly within my life experience.”

The hue and cry over Kushner’s alleged proposal for a secret line of communication with Russia is a red herring. There is nothing extraordinary about it. Such arrangements are made with other countries with regularity, especially where tensions are running high. There are, moreover, many precedents for back channel, secret talks with foreign countries by incoming administrations and even presidential campaigns prior to Election Day.

To cite a few well-known examples:

- In December of 1960, President-elect John F. Kennedy approved a secret meeting between a trusted adviser and a Soviet agent to discuss the possibility of improving relations between the two “super-powers.” The close aide was Robert Kennedy.
- Less than two years later, ABC News reporter John Scali met secretly with Soviet emissary Aleksandr Fomin to set up a back-channel line of communication that was used to negotiate a resolution to the Cuban missile crisis.
- Ronald Reagan’s presidential campaign negotiated a secret deal with Iran in 1980 to prevent the release of the US hostages being held in Tehran until after the November election, so as to deprive Democratic incumbent Jimmy Carter of a boost that would have likely led to Reagan’s defeat. Reagan’s emissary was his campaign chairman, William Casey, who went on

to become CIA director in the Reagan administration.

That this allegation is being seized on to escalate the campaign against Trump highlights the fact that the political conflict centers on issues of US imperialist foreign policy—in particular, the efforts, led by the Democrats, to whip up an anti-Russian frenzy so as to justify an escalation of the war in Syria and a possible military conflict with nuclear-armed Russia, which could quickly lead to a nuclear Third World War.

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