

Putin interview shows bogus character of the US media's anti-Russia campaign

By Isaac Finn
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NBC News broadcast an 11-minute interview with Russian President Vladimir Putin Sunday night, in which host Megyn Kelly repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, sought to bolster allegations of Russian interference in the US 2016 presidential election.

The exclusive interview was part of the debut episode of “Sunday Night With Megyn Kelly” and intended as a platform for Kelly to attack Putin for Russian meddling in the election, as part of the campaign to discredit US President Donald Trump as an agent of Moscow. Only hours before the interview, Kelly attempted to embarrass Putin at the World Economic Forum by demanding he answer allegations of Russian hacking in front of 4,000 attendees, including heads of state.

The claims of Russian involvement in the election were based on attributing to Russian intelligence agencies the hacking of emails from the Democratic National Committee (DNC), detailing the party organization's efforts to promote Hillary Clinton over Bernie Sanders, as well as emails from Clinton chairman John Podesta, revealing the text of Clinton's groveling speeches to Wall Street audiences. No evidence has ever been presented proving a Russian role in the hacking of the emails, delivered anonymously to WikiLeaks, which made them public.

Throughout the NBC interview, Putin effectively rebutted the claims put forward by Kelly about Russia's involvement in hacking the DNC. Putin responded to US intelligence agencies' assertion of Russian meddling, stating, “They aren't analyzing the information in its entirety. I haven't seen, even once, any direct proof of Russian interference in the presidential election.” Kelly had no answer.

The US intelligence community has stated almost since the initial hack that sections of the code and IP

addresses used by the hackers amount to a smoking gun, proving the involvement of the Russian government. Putin pointed to other plausible explanations including the hacks being carried out by non-government “patriotic hackers” in Russia, or US intelligence agencies that are capable of “shifting the blame onto Russia.”

He added, “There is a theory that [president John F.] Kennedy's assassination was arranged by the United States intelligence services. So, if this theory is correct—and that can't be ruled out—then what could be easier in this day and age than using all the technical means at the disposal of intelligence services ... [to point] the finger at Russia?”

Kelly dismissed Putin's statement on the Kennedy assassination, referring to it as a “Cold War conspiracy theory.” The irony of rejecting an intelligence agency role in the killing Kennedy as a “conspiracy theory” while making far more fantastic and unsupported allegations of a complex network linking the Trump administration to Moscow was apparently lost on her.

Putin pointed to the hypocrisy of the US accusations against Russia noting that it is common knowledge that the US intervenes in elections around the world. “Put your finger anywhere on a map of the world,” he said, “and everywhere you will hear complaints that American officials are interfering in internal election processes.”

Kelly responded by citing the ongoing investigation into Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and adviser, for allegedly attempting to set up a secret channel. Putin denied having ever received reports about meetings between Kushner and the Russian ambassador.

He elaborated about the current anti-Russia hysteria as “amazing. You created a sensation out of nothing,

and out of this sensation you turned it into a weapon of war against the current president.”

Throughout the interview Kelly was completely unable to counter any of Putin’s points and jumped from one unsubstantiated claim to another. Her supposed incriminating evidence about Russian collusion with Trump included a single photograph of Michael Flynn, Trump’s first national security adviser who was forced to resign in February, sitting at a table with Putin, and unsupported rumors of the Russian government having information to blackmail Trump with.

Kelly’s inability to press Putin effectively was not merely a personal failure, as negative US media reviews of the program suggested. Rather it reflects the completely flimsy factual basis of the anti-Russian campaign as a whole.

Significantly, there was almost no reporting in the American media Monday about Kelly’s supposed “scoop” in gaining a face-to-face interview with the Russian president. It is clear that the interview was regarded as a political debacle, about which the less said the better.

The ongoing attacks on Trump as a supposed agent of Moscow reflects deep divisions between the Democrats and a section of the Republicans—which wish to continue the Obama administration’s provocative moves against Russia—and the current administration that is attempting to reorient US imperialism to focus more on China.

For these sections of the ruling elite, the campaign against Trump as a Russian agent serves a dual purpose of pressuring the current administration and attempting to divert mass anger over Trump’s policies behind a drive for war against Russia.

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