



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on July 17, 2018

Rand Paul Backs Trump on Putin Summit

With most Republicans either joining in the  media and Democratic anti-Trump frenzy or opting to stay silent following the Helsinki summit between President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky has chosen to publicly defend Trump.

"It's gotten so ridiculous that someone has to stand up and say we should try to engage even our adversaries and open up our lines of communication," Paul told *Politico* after Trump's much-criticized joint press conference with the Russian president.

Many Republicans, including Senators John McCain of Arizona, Benn Sasse of Nebraska, and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina; House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin; and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich have all offered fierce criticism of Trump.

But not Rand Paul, who was among the 17 Republicans, along with Trump, who contended for the 2016 Republican Party nomination that Trump eventually won. During one of the debates, Trump even made fun of Paul's curly hair and his short stature. Paul, however, appears to be putting that and substantive policy differences with Trump on other issues aside to support what he believes Trump is attempting to accomplish in regard to Russia.

Paul is planning to make his own trip to Russia in August. "We're going to talk to the president about some small steps in order to try to thaw the relations between our countries," Paul explained, adding that he hopes to meet with Trump beforehand "to see if there's anything he wants us to follow up on." Paul noted that there are serious issues that the United States and Russia, working together, could develop strategies on, such as the civil war in Syria, the denuclearization of North Korea, and even getting the Russian military out of Ukraine.

Despite all of these serious issues, some Republicans have opted to join the liberal media and the Democrats in using the summit as a political football in an attempt to score points against the president. "Republicans that are making the criticism are either the pro-war Republicans like McCain and Graham," Paul said, "or the anti-Trump ones like Sasse."

"They are motivated by their persistent and consistent dislike of the president," Paul charged. "We have a lot [of] areas ... we should be talking about. We won't get anywhere on it if we just say we want ... to put more sanctions on them and tomorrow they'll surrender and do what we want." Paul voted last year against placing sanctions on Russia.

Trump quickly tweeted his appreciation of Paul's support. "Thank you @Rand Paul, you really get it."

By that, Trump apparently meant that Senator Paul understands that some things are more important than refusing to seek better relations with Russia. In a *Good Morning Britain* interview with Piers Morgan, Trump said it was important for the United States and Russia to "get along."

At the press conference, for which Trump has been roundly criticized, he said, "We made the first steps towards a brighter future, grounded on cooperation and peace. Refusing to engage will not accomplish anything."



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Trump explained why he is wanting to better relations with Putin, despite being at odds on some issues: "The disagreements between our two countries are well-known and President Putin and I discussed them at length today. Even during the tensions of the Cold War, when the world looked much different than it does today, Russia and the U.S. were able to maintain a strong dialogue."

Trump added, "Our relationship has never been worse than it is now. However, that changed. As of about four hours ago. This was a very constructive day. I'm sure we'll be meeting again in the future, often."

Putin agreed: "The Cold War has ended a long time ago, the situation in the world has drastically changed. Russia and the United States are now facing totally different challenges."

One would think that Trump would be praised for seeking better relations with a nation that has a powerful military and nuclear missiles, but the focus of the media — even by the normally friendly Fox News — was on alleged Russian interference in the last presidential election. While it is not surprising that Shepard Smith, a liberal, thought Trump's press conference was disloyal to America, even Chris Wallace only seemed to care about a (curiously-timed) indictment of 12 Russian (alleged) spies in his interview with Putin.

When Putin dismissed the indictment to Wallace, insisting that Russia had never interfered in the internal affairs of the United States, "let alone its elections," Wallace retorted, "But sir, this is the indictment."

Perhaps Wallace needs to brush up on an American judicial standard: An indictment is not a conviction, and an accused person is entitled to a presumption of innocence until guilt is proven beyond reasonable doubt. One presumes that would pertain to foreigners, including Russians.

"This is utterly ridiculous," Putin responded.

It may very well be, but it is enough for not only Democrats and their allies in the media, but apparently also for many Republicans and the supposedly "fair and balanced" Fox News to convict not only some Russians, but to use that to condemn the president of the United States. Perhaps Trump's critics would have been happier if Trump would have punched Putin in the nose? Hardly. It should be obvious to all that they would criticize anything Trump did, just to be critical.

Fortunately, at least one Republican — Rand Paul — "gets it." The interests of the United States lie in a better relationship with Russia, even if that means skipping the opportunity to score political points against Donald Trump.

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