



Trump, Pence Support Assange's Remarks on Alleged Russian Hacking

President-elect Donald Trump has publicly supported the assertions made by WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange on the *Sean Hannity Fox News* TV show this week, in which Assange flatly denied that he received the hacked material from the Russians.

"I know a lot about hacking. And hacking is a very hard thing to prove," Trump said, adding that instead of the Russians, it "could be somebody else."



Assange told Hannity that a 14-year-old could have hacked the personal e-mail account of John Podesta — chairman of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign — and turned over to WikiLeaks damaging e-mails that involved the Democratic National Committee (DNC).

"Why was DNC so careless?" Trump asked in one of his many tweets, noting that Assange had said, "Russians did not give him the info!"

Instead, Trump argued that it is impossible to determine whether a Russian government operative did the hacking, or just "somebody sitting on their bed that weighs 400 pounds."

Appearing on Hannity's show, Assange was unequivocal in his denial that he received any hacked material from the Russians. He refused to give any more information as to how he did receive the e-mails released by WikiLeaks during the recent presidential campaign, seen as damaging to Clinton's chances of winning. Assange explained that he needed to protect his sources, and told Hannity, "Our source is not the Russian government. It is not state parties."

Vice President-elect Mike Pence defended Trump's comments at a Capitol Hill news conference, saying that Trump had "expressed his very sincere and healthy American skepticism about intelligence conclusions."

House Speaker Paul Ryan, however, was highly critical of Assange, calling him "a sycophant for Russia," who "leaks, steals data and compromises national security." In the past, most Republicans viewed Assange highly unfavorably because of his leaks of American military secrets from Iraq, and his publication of diplomatic cables that Republicans contended at the time could have gotten American sources killed.

Of course, this would seem to buttress Assange's argument that he is not releasing the DNC and Clinton campaign e-mails because he favors the Republicans over the Democrats.

Ryan told reporters that Trump has not yet had his latest briefing on alleged Russian interference in the U.S. presidential election, and that perhaps there could be information provided that would cause him to change his mind on the culpability of the Russians. "Hopefully, he'll get up to speed on what's been happening and what Russia has or has not done," Ryan stated.

Trump has said that he believes it is time to move beyond the talk about alleged Russian interference in



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on January 4, 2017

the U.S. election, but that he will listen to what the American intelligence experts tell him. He was also critical of what he called a delay in the briefing until Friday, saying in a tweet that “perhaps more time [was] needed to build a case. Very strange!”

The Obama administration answered back, contending that the intelligence briefing for Trump was always intended for Friday in New York City. They argued that not even Obama has received this latest briefing yet. National Intelligence Director James Clapper, National Security Agency Director Mike Rogers, FBI Director James Comey, and CIA Director John Brennan are all scheduled to attend the briefing with Trump.

Russian spokesman Dimitri Peskov reacted to the comments of a U.S. intelligence officer who told CNN that the hack can be traced to keyboards that feature Cyrillic characters, asserting, “I don’t understand what this means exactly but Cyrillic characters can be used everywhere. Once again I reject the possibility that official Russia can be involved in any way.”

Adding to the continuing controversy is a widely held misunderstanding as to what the Russians are actually accused of by the Obama administration’s intelligence agencies. While many e-mails damaging to the Clinton campaign were released during the campaign, a recent poll indicated that a majority of those who voted for Clinton mistakenly believe the Russians actually tampered with vote tallies in order to get Trump elected president.

The confusion and controversy has diverted attention away from the actual *content* of the e-mails. One e-mail, for example, revealed that Clinton was given, in advance, a question that she would be receiving during a CNN debate with her Democratic opponent, Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont.

Republicans who recall the 2012 debate between President Obama and Governor Mitt Romney (in which a debate moderator intervened to challenge an assertion made by Romney, the Republican nominee) have speculated that such actions favoring the Democrats may be only the tip of the iceberg of their slanted activities.

What is different about Trump is that he apparently is not going to allow the mainstream media to get away with their slanted coverage of his presidency without a fight.



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