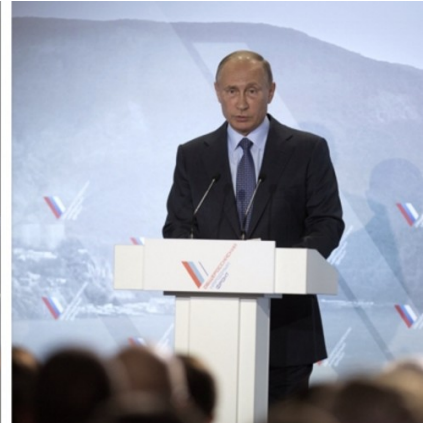




## Trump-Russia Connection or Wild Conspiracy Theory?

The alleged connection between Donald Trump and Russia — asserted by Hillary Clinton in both the second and third presidential debates as a dodge for the leaked e-mails and other documents which have hounded her candidacy — has dominated much of the speculative attention of both the mainstream media and social media for weeks. Is there anything to it? Is Trump, in essence, Putin's puppet, as Clinton claimed in the third debate?



In an interesting twist of logic (if one can use that word to describe the incoherent and dissonant arguments made by a woman who still denies — despite mountains of evidence to the contrary — that she sent and received classified data over her unsecured, private e-mail server), Hillary Clinton at once claims that Russia is responsible for the hack of the servers of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) in late spring and that there is no way her server was hacked by anyone. Leveraging the anti-Russian sentiment to its fullest, she and others in the DNC have sought to shift the focus away from what was on the servers and toward blaming Russia for the hack. After all, if Russia is trying to throw the election to Trump, wouldn't the patriotic vote be for Clinton?

By the time WikiLeaks announced that a trove of damning documents and e-mails would be published on the Internet, Clinton and the DNC (along with their lapdog media) were already in full-blown "it was Russia" mode. On the same day that a video of Donald Trump emerged in which he can be heard bragging of his sexual abuse of women — which he has since claimed was just "locker room talk" — WikiLeaks began a rolling release of the promised leaked documents. [Both of these stories deserved media attention](#). Only one got it.

By the time the media was ready to report anything on the WikiLeaks dump, it was to speculate as to what part Russia played in the initial hack. Clinton — in her role as the staunch anti-Russian — used the timing of the second debate to attack Trump for the video and his supposed ties to Russia, which she plainly blamed for the leaked documents, saying to moderator Martha Raddatz:

But, you know, let's talk about what's really going on here, Martha, because our intelligence community just came out and said in the last few days that the Kremlin, meaning Putin and the Russian government, are directing the attacks, the hacking on American accounts to influence our election. And WikiLeaks is part of that, as are other sites where the Russians hack information, we don't even know if it's accurate information, and then they put it out.

We have never in the history of our country been in a situation where an adversary, a foreign power, is working so hard to influence the outcome of the election. And believe me, they're not doing it to get me elected. They're doing it to try to influence the election for Donald Trump.

[Clinton went even further in the third debate](#), bringing up Putin in an attempt to dodge a question about a leaked document showing that she gave a speech to a foreign bank in which she said, "My dream is a hemispheric common market with open trade and open borders." She — again — put the



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emphasis on the fact that WikiLeaks was providing the leaked documents rather than on what the leaked documents have to say. Then she claimed, on the authority of “17 of our intelligence agencies,” that Russia was behind the hacked and leaked documents:

But you are very clearly quoting from WikiLeaks. And what’s really important about WikiLeaks is that the Russian government has engaged in espionage against Americans. They have hacked American websites, American accounts of private people, of institutions. Then they have given that information to WikiLeaks for the purpose of putting it on the Internet.

This has come from the highest levels of the Russian government, clearly, from Putin himself, in an effort, as 17 of our intelligence agencies have confirmed, to influence our election.

Trump rebutted by bringing the conversation back on topic (not his usual strongest point), saying:

She wants open borders. People are going to pour into our country. People are going to come in from Syria. She wants 550 percent more people than Barack Obama, and he has thousands and thousands of people. They have no idea where they come from.

And you see, we are going to stop radical Islamic terrorism in this country. She won’t even mention the words, and neither will President Obama. So I just want to tell you, she wants open borders.

Now we can talk about Putin. I don’t know Putin. He said nice things about me. If we got along well, that would be good. If Russia and the United States got along well and went after ISIS, that would be good.

He has no respect for her. He has no respect for our president. And I’ll tell you what: We’re in very serious trouble, because we have a country with tremendous numbers of nuclear warheads — 1,800, by the way — where they expanded and we didn’t, 1,800 nuclear warheads. And she’s playing chicken. Look, Putin...

At this point, Clinton interrupted to say, “Well, that’s because he’d rather have a puppet as president of the United States.”

So, getting past the he-said-she-said, what are the facts as we know them?

On Monday, the *New York Times* [reported](#) that after conducting a months-long “investigation into a Russian role in the American presidential campaign” in which “agents scrutinized advisers close to Donald J. Trump, looked for financial connections with Russian financial figures, searched for those involved in hacking the computers of Democrats, and even chased a lead — which they ultimately came to doubt — about a possible secret channel of email communication from the Trump Organization to a Russian bank,” the FBI “sees no clear link” between Trump and Russia. Of course, in typical leftist fashion, the *Times* not-so-gently insinuates that the FBI is guilty of pulling punches in the investigation. Interestingly, the *Times* seemed to miss that that is exactly what happened in the FBI’s investigation into Clinton’s e-mail server.

As for Clinton’s claims that the purpose of the hacked and leaked documents and e-mails was to influence the election for Trump, the *Times* article admits:

Law enforcement officials say that none of the investigations so far have found any conclusive or direct link between Mr. Trump and the Russian government. And even the hacking into Democratic emails, F.B.I. and intelligence officials now believe, was aimed at disrupting the presidential election rather than electing Mr. Trump.



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Also on Monday, *Slate* [published](#) an article claiming that a server belonging to Donald Trump was “communicating in a secretive fashion” with servers in Russia. By the next day, the *Washington Post* had [debunked](#) the *Slate* article, saying, “That secret Trump-Russia email server link is likely neither secret nor a Trump-Russia link.” Based in part on an interview with Naadir Jeewa, who “does consulting work on precisely the sorts of systems involved in” the scenario involving the server *Slate* claims was acting as a conduit between Trump and Russia, the article by the *Post* explains:

To understand what’s likely happening, we need to establish a few basics. First of all, the Trump server wasn’t really a Trump server. It was much less of a Trump email server, for example, than Hillary Clinton’s email server was hers. Clinton had a physical server that hosted her email. The trump-email.com domain that Alfa was connecting to was hosted by a company called Cendyn. Cendyn runs marketing systems for the hospitality industry, meaning that it offers an out-of-the-box solution for a company that owns a bunch of hotels to push out sales pitch emails to its customers. In other words, trump-email.com isn’t the email server Trump used to send emails from his closet. It was a domain name that linked back to a Cendyn server.

This is important for a few reasons. The first, Jeewa said, was that the trump-email.com was configured to reject a certain type of query from another server. Since its job was simply to push out thousands of enticements to come stay at Trump Soho (or whatever) it didn’t need to receive many incoming requests (like incoming email). The second is that the conspiracy theory hinges on Trump’s team using an offsite server hosted by someone else for its quiet communications with its Russian allies. Instead of, say, their own server, under their own control. Or an encrypted chat app. Or a phone call.

This writer has to admit to being amused to see the shoe on the other foot (or the tinfoil hat on the other head, in this instance) as the Left trots out wild conspiracy theories to create a Trump-Putin connection to make Clinton retroactively correct. In point of fact, Clinton might be better off trying to implicate Trump in the Kennedy assassination.

But, what about Clinton’s assertion that WikiLeaks is releasing documents pilfered by Russia for the sake of influencing the election for Trump? Aside from the FBI saying that there does not appear to be any attempt to influence the election for Trump, Julian Assange, the founder and public face of WikiLeaks, denies that Russian hackers are his source.

In an upcoming documentary made by Dartmouth Films, Assange speaks of the “Clinton camp” putting forth a “hysteria that Russia is responsible for everything.” He goes on to say, “Hillary Clinton has stated multiple times, falsely, that 17 US intelligence agencies had assessed that Russia was the source of our publications. That’s false — we can say that the Russian government is not the source.”

Furthermore, the Kremlin denies Clinton’s claims. Russian presidential press secretary Dmitry Peskov called the claims “nonsense.” While that — in and of itself — would not carry much weight, when it is added to the body of evidence that includes Assange denying the Russian connection, the laughably far-fetched lengths to which the Left will go to promote easily debunkable conspiracy theories, the FBI stating that there is “no clear link” between Trump and Russia, and Trump himself denying that he has any dealings with Russia, it’s fairly easy to see that the only thing there is to see here is an imploding campaign by the woman who — the last time she occupied 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue — claimed that her husband’s impeachment was the result of a “vast right-wing conspiracy.”

Some things never change.





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