

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018

The President's News Conference With President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia in Helsinki, Finland

July 16, 2018

President Putin. Thank you so much. Shall we start working, I guess? Distinguished Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen: Negotiations with the President of the United States, Donald Trump, took place in a frank and businesslike atmosphere. I think we can call it a success and a very fruitful round of negotiations.

We carefully analyzed the current status—the present and the future of the Russia-United States relationship; key issues of the global agenda. It's quite clear to everyone that the bilateral relationship are going through a complicated stage, and yet those impediments—the current tension, the tense atmosphere—essentially have no solid reason behind it.

The cold war is a thing of past. The era of acute ideological confrontation of the two countries is a thing of the remote past, is a vestige of the past. The situation in the world changed dramatically.

Today, both Russia and the United States face a whole new set of challenges. Those include a dangerous maladjustment of mechanisms for maintaining international security and stability, regional crises, the creeping threats of terrorism and transnational crime. It's the snowballing problems in the economy, environmental risks, and other sets of challenges. We can only cope with these challenges if we join the ranks and work together. Hopefully, we will reach this understanding with our American partners.

Today's negotiations reflected our joint wish—our joint wish with President Trump to redress this negative situation in the bilateral relationship, outline the first steps for improving this relationship to restore the acceptable level of trust, and going back to the previous level of interaction on all mutual interests issues.

As major nuclear powers, we bear special responsibility for maintaining international security. And it made it vital—and we mentioned this during the negotiations—it's crucial that we fine-tune the dialogue on strategic stability and global security and nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We submitted our American colleagues a note with a number of specific suggestions.

We believe it necessary to work together further on to interact on the disarmament agenda, military, and technical cooperation. This includes the extension of the Strategic Offensive Arms Limitation Treaty. It's a dangerous situation with the global American antimissile defense system; it's the implementation issues with the INF treaty; and of course, the agenda of nonplacement of weapons in space.

We favor the continued cooperation in counterterrorism and maintaining cybersecurity. And I'd like to point out specifically that our special services are cooperating quite successfully together. The most recent example is their operational cooperation within the recently concluded World Football Cup.

In general, the contacts among the special services should be put to a systemwide basis—should be brought to a systemic framework. I recall—I reminded President Trump about the suggestion to reestablish the working group on antiterrorism.

We also mentioned a plethora of regional crises. It's not always that our postures dovetail exactly. And yet, the overlapping and mutual interests abound. We have to look for points of contact and interact closer in a variety of international fora.

Clearly, we mentioned the regional crisis; for instance, Syria. As far as Syria is concerned, the task of establishing peace and reconciliation in this country could be the first showcase example of this successful joint work. Russia and the United States apparently can act proactively and take—assume the leadership in this issue, and organize the interaction to overcome humanitarian crisis, and help Syrian refugees to go back to their homes.

In order to accomplish this level of successful cooperation in Syria, we have all the required components. Let me remind you that both Russian and American military have acquired a useful experience of coordination of their action, established the operational channels of communication which permitted to avoid dangerous incidents and unintentional collisions in the air and in the ground.

Also, crushing terrorists in the southwest of Syria—the south of Syria—should be brought to the full compliance with the treaty of 1974 about the separation of forces—about separation of forces of Israel and Syria. This will bring peace to Golan Heights and bring a more peaceful relationship between Syria and Israel, and also to provide security of the State of Israel.

Mr. President paid special attention to the issue during today's negotiations, and I would like to confirm that Russia is interested in this development, and this will act accordingly. Thus far, we will make a step toward creating a lasting peace in compliance with the respective resolutions of Security Council, for instance, the Resolution 338.

We—it is—we're glad that the Korean Peninsula issue is starting to resolve. To a great extent, it was possible thanks to the personal engagement of President Trump, who opted for dialogue instead of confrontation.

You know, we also mentioned our concern about the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA. Well, the U.S.—our U.S. counterparts are aware of our posture. Let me remind you that thanks to the Iranian nuclear deal, Iran became the most controlled country in the world; it submitted to the control of IAEA. It effectively ensures the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear program and strengthens the nonproliferation regime.

While we discussed the internal Ukrainian crisis, we paid special attention to the bona fide implementation of Minsk Agreements by Kiev. At the same time, the United States could be more decisive in nudging the Ukrainian leadership and encourage it to work actively on this. We paid more attention to economic ties and economic cooperation. It's clear that both countries—the businesses of both countries are interested in this.

American delegation was one of the largest delegations in the St. Petersburg Economic Forum. It featured over 500 representatives from American businesses. We agreed—me and President Trump—we agreed to create the high-level working group that would bring together captains of Russian and American business. After all, entrepreneurs and businessmen know better how to articulate this successful business cooperation. We'll let them think and make their proposals and their suggestions in this regard.

Once again, President Trump mentioned the issue of the so-called interference of Russia when the American elections, and I had to reiterate things I said several times, including during our personal contacts, that the Russian state has never interfered and is not going to interfere into internal American affairs, including the election process.

Any specific material, if such things arise, we are ready to analyze together. For instance, we can analyze them through the joint working group on cybersecurity, the establishment of which we discussed during our previous contacts.

And clearly, it's past time we restore our cooperation in the cultural area, in the humanitarian area. As far as—I think you know that recently we hosted the American Congressmen delegation, and now it's perceived and portrayed almost as a historic event, although it should have been just a current affairs—just business as usual. And in this regard, we mentioned this proposal to the President.

But we have to think about the practicalities of our cooperation, but also about the rationale, the underlying logic of it. And we have to engage experts on bilateral relationship who know history and the background of our relationship. The idea is to create an expert council that would include political scientists, prominent diplomats, and former military experts from both countries who would look for points of contact between the two countries, that would look for ways on putting the relationship on the trajectory of growth.

In general, we are glad with the outcome of our first full-scale meeting, because previously we only had a chance to talk briefly on international fora. We had a good conversation with President Trump, and I hope that we start to understand each other better. And I'm grateful to Donald for it.

Clearly, there are some challenges left when we were not able to clear all the backlog. But I think that we made a first important step in this direction.

And in conclusion, I want to point out that this atmosphere of cooperation is something that we are especially grateful for to our Finnish hosts. We're grateful for Finnish people and Finnish leadership for what they've done. I know that we've caused some inconvenience to Finland, and we apologize for it.

Thank you for your attention.

President Trump. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Thank you. I have just concluded a meeting with President Putin on a wide range of critical issues for both of our countries. We had direct, open, deeply productive dialogue. It went very well.

Before I begin, I want to thank President Niinistö of Finland for graciously hosting today's summit. President Putin and I were saying how lovely it was and what a great job they did.

I also want to congratulate Russia and President Putin for having done such an excellent job in hosting the World Cup. It was really one of the best ever, and your team also did very well. It was a great job.

I'm here today to continue the proud tradition of bold American diplomacy. From the earliest days of our Republic, American leaders have understood that diplomacy and engagement is preferable to conflict and hostility. A productive dialogue is not only good for the United States and good for Russia, but it is good for the world.

The disagreements between our two countries are well known, and President Putin and I discussed them at length today. But if we're going to solve many of the problems facing our world, then we are going to have to find ways to cooperate in pursuit of shared interests.

Too often, in both recent past and long ago, we have seen the consequences when diplomacy is left on the table. We have also seen the benefits of cooperation. In the last century, our nations fought alongside one another in the Second World War. Even during the tensions of the cold war, when the world looked much different than it does today, the United States and Russia were able to maintain a strong dialogue.

But our relationship has never been worse than it is now. However, that changed as of about 4 hours ago. I really believe that. Nothing would be easier politically than to refuse to meet, to refuse to engage. But that would not accomplish anything. As President, I cannot make decisions on foreign policy in a futile effort to appease partisan critics or the media or Democrats who want to do nothing but resist and obstruct.

Constructive dialogue between the United States and Russia affords the opportunity to open new pathways toward peace and stability in our world. I would rather take a political risk in pursuit of peace than to risk peace in pursuit of politics. As President, I will always put what is best for America and what is best for the American people.

During today's meeting, I addressed directly with President Putin the issue of Russian interference in our elections. I felt this was a message best delivered in person. We spent a great deal of time talking about it, and President Putin may very well want to address it, and very strongly—because he feels very strongly about it, and he has an interesting idea.

We also discussed one of the most critical challenges facing humanity: nuclear proliferation. I provided an update on my meeting last month with Chairman Kim on the denuclearization of North Korea. And after today, I am very sure that President Putin and Russia want very much to end that problem. They're going to work with us, and I appreciate that commitment.

The President and I also discussed the scourge of radical Islamic terrorism. Both Russia and the United States have suffered horrific terrorist attacks, and we have agreed to maintain open communication between our security agencies to protect our citizens from this global menace.

Last year, we told Russia about a planned attack in St. Petersburg, and they were able to stop it cold. They found them. They stopped them. There was no doubt about it. I appreciated President Putin's phone call afterwards to thank me.

I also emphasized the importance of placing pressure on Iran to halt its nuclear ambitions and to stop its campaign of violence throughout the area, throughout the Middle East.

As we discussed at length, the crisis in Syria is a complex one. Cooperation between our two countries has the potential to save hundreds of thousands of lives. I also made clear that the United States will not allow Iran to benefit from our successful campaign against ISIS. We have just about eradicated ISIS in the area.

We also agreed that representatives from our national security councils will meet to follow up on all of the issues we addressed today and to continue the progress we have started right here in Helsinki.

Today's meeting is only the beginning of a longer process. But we have taken the first steps toward a brighter future and one with a strong dialogue and a lot of thought. Our expectations are grounded in realism, but our hopes are grounded in America's desire for friendship, cooperation, and peace. And I think I can speak on behalf of Russia when I say that also.

President Putin, I want to thank you again for joining me for these important discussions and for advancing open dialogue between Russia and the United States. Our meeting carries on a long tradition of diplomacy between Russia, the United States, for the greater good of all.

And this was a very constructive day. This was a very constructive few hours that we spent together. It's in the interest of both of our countries to continue our conversation, and we have agreed to do so.

I'm sure we'll be meeting again in the future often, and hopefully, we will solve every one of the problems that we discussed today.

So, again, President Putin, thank you very much.

[At this point, President Trump and President Putin shook hands, and President Putin spoke briefly in English as follows.]

President Putin. Thank you, sir.

Moderator. Distinguished Presidents, now the journalists would have a chance to ask two questions, two sets of question each. First, the Russian journalist will ask the question. Please give your affiliation.

Russia-U.S. Relations/Nord Stream 2 Russia-Germany Natural Gas Pipeline/U.S. Liquefied Natural Gas Production

Q. Good afternoon, my name is Alexei Meshkov, Interfax information agency. I have a question to President Trump. During your recent European tour, you've mentioned that the implementation of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline makes Europe the hostage of Russia. And you suggested that you could free Europe from this by supplying American LNG. But this cold winter actually showed that the current model—current mechanism of the supply of fuel to Europe is quite viable. At the same time, as far as I know, U.S. had to buy even Russian gas for Boston.

I have a question. The implementation of your idea has a political tinge to it, or is this a practical one? Because there will be a gap formed in the supply and demand mechanism, and first it's the consuming countries who will fall into this gap.

And the second question: Before the meeting with President Putin, you called him an adversary, a rival, and yet you expressed hope that you will be able to bring this relationship to a new level. Did you manage to do this?

President Trump. Actually, I called him a competitor. And a good competitor he is. And I think the word "competitor" is a—it's a compliment. I think that we will be competing, when you talk about the pipeline. I'm not sure necessarily that it's in the best interest of Germany or not, but that was a decision that they made. We'll be competing—as you know, the United States is now, or soon will be—but I think it actually is right now—the largest in the oil and gas world.

So we're going to be selling LNG, and we'll have to be competing with the pipeline. And I think we'll compete successfully, although there is a little advantage locationally. So I just wish them luck. I mean, I did. I discussed with Angela Merkel in pretty strong tones. But I also know where they're all coming from. And they have a very close source. So we'll see how that all works out.

But we have lots of sources now, and the United States is much different than it was a number of years ago when we weren't able to extract what we can extract today. So today we're number one in the world at that. And I think we'll be out there competing very strongly.

Thank you very much.

President Putin. If I may, I'd throw in some two cents. We talked to Mr. President, including this subject as well. We are aware of the stance of President Trump. And I think that we, as a major oil and gas power—and the United States, as a major oil and gas power as well—we could work together on regulation of international markets, because neither of us is actually interested in the plummeting of the prices.

And the consumers will suffer as well, and the consumers in the United States will suffer as well, and the shale gas production will suffer. Because beyond a certain price bracket, it's no longer profitable to produce gas, but nor we are interested in driving prices up, because it will drain juices—life juices—from all other sectors of the economy, from machine building, et cetera. So we do have space for cooperation here, as the first thing.

Then, about the Nord Stream 2, Mr. President voiced his concerns about the possibility of disappearance of transit through Ukraine. And I reassured Mr. President that Russia stands ready to maintain this transit. Moreover, we stand ready to extend this transit contract that is about to expire next year, in case—if the dispute between the economic entities, dispute will be settled in the Stockholm arbitration court.

White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders. The first question for a U.S. journalist goes to Jeff Mason, from Reuters.

Russia-U.S. Relations/Investigation Into Russia's Interference in 2016 Presidential Election

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, you tweeted this morning that it's U.S. foolishness, stupidity, and the Mueller probe that is responsible for the decline in U.S. relations with Russia. Do you hold Russia at all accountable for anything in particular? And if so, what would you consider them—that they are responsible for?

President Trump. Yes, I do. I hold both countries responsible. I think that the United States has been foolish. I think we've all been foolish. We should have had this dialogue a long time ago—a long time, frankly, before I got to office. And I think we're all to blame. I think that the United States now has stepped forward, along with Russia. And we're getting together. And we have a chance to do some great things, whether it's nuclear proliferation, in terms of stopping—because we have to do it. Ultimately, that's probably the most important thing that we can be working on.

But I do feel that we have both made some mistakes. I think that the probe is a disaster for our country. I think it's kept us apart. It's kept us separated. There was no collusion at all. Everybody knows it. People are being brought out to the fore.

So far, that I know, virtually none of it related to the campaign. And they're going to have to try really hard to find somebody that did relate to the campaign. That was a clean campaign. I beat Hillary Clinton easily. And frankly, we beat her—and I'm not even saying from the standpoint—we won that race. And it's a shame that there can even be a little bit of a cloud over it.

People know that. People understand it. But the main thing, and we discussed this also, is zero collusion. And it has had a negative impact upon the relationship of the two largest nuclear powers in the world. We have 90 percent of nuclear power between the two countries. It's ridiculous. It's ridiculous what's going on with the probe.

Investigation Into Russia's Interference in 2016 Presidential Election

Q. For President Putin, if I could follow up as well. Why should Americans and why should President Trump believe your statement that Russia did not intervene in the 2016 election, given the evidence that U.S. intelligence agencies have provided? And will you consider extraditing the 12 Russian officials that were indicted last week by a U.S. grand jury?

President Trump. Well, I'm going to let the President answer the second part of that question. But, as you know, the whole concept of that came up perhaps a little bit before, but it came out as a reason why the Democrats lost an election, which, frankly, they should have been able to win, because the electoral college is much more advantageous for Democrats, as you know, than it is to Republicans.

We won the electoral college by a lot—306 to 223, I believe. And that was a well-fought—that was a well-fought battle. We did a great job.

And, frankly, I'm going to let the President speak to the second part of your question. But just to say it one time again, and I say it all the time: There was no collusion. I didn't know the President. There was nobody to collude with. There was no collusion with the campaign. And every time you hear all of these—you know, 12 and 14—it's stuff that has nothing to do—and frankly, they admit, these are not people involved in the campaign.

But to the average reader out there, they're saying, "Well, maybe that does." It doesn't. And even the people involved, some perhaps told mis-stories or, though in one case, the FBI said there was no lie. There was no lie. Somebody else said there was.

We ran a brilliant campaign, and that's why I'm President. Thank you.

President Putin. As to who is to be believed and to who is not to be believed, you can trust no one, if you take this. Where did you get this idea that President Trump trusts me or I trust him? He defends the interests of the United States of America, and I do defend the interests of the Russian Federation.

We do have interests that are common. We are looking for points of contact. There are issues where our postures diverge, and we are looking for ways to reconcile our differences; how to make our effort more meaningful.

We should not proceed from the immediate political interests that guide certain political powers in our countries. We should be guided by facts. Could you name a single fact that would definitively prove the collusion? This is utter nonsense, just like the President recently mentioned.

Yes, the public at large in the United States had a certain perceived opinion of the candidates during the campaign, but there's nothing particularly extraordinary about it. That's the usual thing.

President Trump, when he was a candidate, he mentioned the need to restore the Russia-U.S. relationship, and it's clear that a certain part of American society felt sympathetic about it, and different people could express their sympathy in different ways. But isn't that natural? Isn't

it natural to be sympathetic towards a person who is willing to restore the relationship with our country, who wants to work with us?

We heard the accusations about the Concord country. Well, as far as I know, this company hired American lawyers. And the accusations doesn't—doesn't have a fighting chance in the American courts. So there's no evidence when it comes to the actual facts. So we have to be guided by facts and not by rumors.

Now, let's get back to the issue of these 12 alleged intelligence officers of Russia. I don't know the full extent of the situation, but the President Trump mentioned this issue, and I will look into it.

So far, I can say the following, the things that—off the top of my head: We have an acting—an existing agreement between the United States of America and the Russian Federation, an existing treaty that dates back to 1999, the Mutual Assistance on Criminal Cases. This treaty is in full effect. It works quite efficiently.

On average, we initiate about a hundred, hundred and fifty criminal cases upon request from foreign states. For instance, the last year, there was one extradition case, upon the request, sent by the United States. So this treaty has specific legal procedures.

We can offer that the appropriate commission headed by Special Attorney Mueller—he can use this treaty as a solid foundation, and send a formal, an official request to us so that we would interrogate—we would hold the questioning of these individuals who he believes are privy to some crimes. And our law enforcement are perfectly able to do this questioning and send the appropriate materials to the United States.

Moreover, we can meet you halfway; we can make another step. We can actually permit official representatives of the United States, including the members of this very commission headed by Mr. Mueller—we can let them into the country and they will be present at this questioning.

But in this case, there is another condition. This kind of effort should be a mutual one. Then we would expect that the Americans would reciprocate, and they would question officials, including the officers of law enforcement and intelligence services of the United States whom we believe are—who have something to do with illegal actions on the territory of Russia, and we have to request the presence of our law enforcement.

For instance, we can bring up the—Mr. Browder in this particular case. Business associates of Mr. Browder have earned over \$1½ billion in Russia. They never paid any taxes, neither in Russia nor in the United States, and yet the money escaped the country. They were transferred to the United States. They sent a huge amount of money—400 million—as a contribution to the campaign of Hillary Clinton. Well, that's their personal case. It might have been legal, the contribution itself, but the way the money was earned was illegal.

So we have a solid reason to believe that some intelligence officers accompanied and guided these transactions. So we have an interest of questioning them. We can—that could be a first step, and we can also extend it. Options abound, and they all can be found in an appropriate legal framework.

Q. President Putin, did you want President Trump to win the election? And did you direct any of your officials to help him do that?

President Putin. Yes, I did. Yes, I did. Because he talked about bringing the U.S.-Russia relationship back to normal.

I think there can be three questions from the Russian pool.

Russia Today, you have the floor.

Israel/Syria/Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) Terrorist Organization

[*The reporter spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. Thank you so much. And good evening to everyone. My name is Ilya Petrenko, RT TV Channel.

[*The reporter spoke in English as follows.*]

Q. First question for Mr. Trump, in English. Mr. President, would you please go into the details of possibly any specific arrangements for the U.S. to work together with Russia in Syria, if any of these kind of arrangements were made today or discussed?

[*The reporter spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Q. And my question to President Putin, in Russian: Since we brought up the issue of football several times, I ask—I use the football language. Mr. Pompeo mentioned that, when we talk about the Syrian cooperation, the ball is in the Syrian court. Mr. Putin—in the Russian court—is it true? And how would you use this fact, the having the ball?

President Trump. Well, I guess I'll answer the first part of the question. We've worked with Israel long and hard for many years, many decades. I think we've never—never has anyone, any country been closer than we are. President Putin also is helping Israel. And we both spoke with Bibi Netanyahu, and they would like to do certain things with respect to Syria having to do with the safety of Israel. So in that respect, we absolutely would like to work in order to help Israel, and Israel will be working with us. So both countries would work jointly.

And I think that, when you look at all of the progress that's been made in certain sections with the eradication of ISIS—we're about 98 percent, 99 percent there—and other things that have taken place that we've done, and that, frankly, Russia has helped us with in certain respects. But I think that working with Israel is a great thing, and creating safety for Israel is something that both President Putin and I would like to see very much.

One little thing I might add to that is the helping of people—helping of people. Because you have such horrible, if you see—and I've seen reports and I've seen pictures, I've seen just about everything. And if we can do something to help the people of Syria get back into some form of shelter and—on a humanitarian basis. And that's what the word was, really, a humanitarian basis. I think that both of us would be very interested in doing that, and we are. We will do that.

Thank you very much.

Russia-U.S. Military Coordination

Q. Excuse me, but, for now, no specific agreements? For instance, between the militaries?

President Trump. Well, our militaries do get along. In fact, our militaries, actually, have gotten along probably better than our political leaders for years. But our militaries do get along very well, and they do coordinate in Syria and other places.

Okay, thank you.

President Putin. Yes, we did mention this. We mentioned the humanitarian track of this issue. Yesterday, I discussed this with French President, Mr. Macron. And we reached an agreement that, together with European countries, including France, we will step up this effort.

On our behalf, we will provide military cargo aircraft to deliver the humanitarian cargo. And today I brought up this issue with President Trump. I think there is plenty of things to look into.

The crucial thing here is that huge amount of refugees are in Turkey, in Lebanon, in Jordan—in the states that border—are adjacent to Syria. If we help them, the migratory pressure upon the European states will drop, will be decreased manyfold. And I believe it's crucial from any point of view: from humanitarian point of view, from the point of view of helping people, helping the refugees.

And in general, I agree, I concur with President Trump: Our military cooperate quite successfully together. They do get along, and I hope they will be able to do so in future. And we will keep working in the Astana format—I mean Russia, Turkey, and Iran—which I informed President Trump about.

But we do stand ready to link these efforts to the so-called small group of states so that the process would be a broader one, it would be a multidimensional one, and so that we will be able to maximize our fighting chance to get the ultimate success in the issue of Syria.

And speaking about the having the ball in our court in Syria, President Trump has just mentioned that we've successfully concluded the World Football Cup. Speaking of the football, actually——

[An aide handed a soccer ball to President Putin.]

President Putin. Mr. President, I'll give this ball to you——

[President Putin presented the soccer ball to President Trump.]

President Putin. ——and now the ball is in your court. *[Applause]*. All the more that the United States will host the World Cup in 2026.

President Trump. Thank you. That's right. Thank you very much. We do host it. And we hope we do as good a job. That's very nice. That will go to my son Barron. We have no question. In fact, Melania, here you go. *[Laughter]*

[President Trump tossed the ball to First Lady Melania Trump, who was seated in the audience.]

President Trump. Okay.

Press Secretary Sanders. The final question from the United States will go to Jonathan Lemire, from the AP.

Russia's Interference in 2016 Presidential Election

Q. Thank you. A question for each President. President Trump——

President Trump. Yes.

Q. —you first. Just now, President Putin denied having anything to do with the election interference in 2016. Every U.S. intelligence agency has concluded that Russia did. What—who—my first question for you, sir, is, who do you believe?

My second question is, would you now, with the whole world watching, tell President Putin—would you denounce what happened in 2016? And would you warn him to never do it again?

President Trump. So let me just say that we have two thoughts. You have groups that are wondering why the FBI never took the server. Why haven't they taken the server? Why was the FBI told to leave the office of the Democratic National Committee? I've been wondering that. I've been asking that for months and months, and I've been tweeting it out and calling it out on social media. Where is the server? I want to know: Where is the server? And what is the server saying?

With that being said, all I can do is ask the question. My people came to me—Dan Coats came to me and some others—they said they think it's Russia. I have President Putin; he just said it's not Russia.

I will say this: I don't see any reason why it would be, but I really do want to see the server. But I have—I have confidence in both parties. I really believe that this will probably go on for a while, but I don't think it can go on without finding out what happened to the server. What happened to the servers of the Pakistani gentleman that worked on the DNC? Where are those servers? They're missing. Where are they? What happened to Hillary Clinton's e-mails? Thirty-three thousand e-mails gone—just gone. I think, in Russia, they wouldn't be gone so easily. I think it's a disgrace that we can't get Hillary Clinton's 33,000 e-mails.

So I have great confidence in my intelligence people, but I will tell you that President Putin was extremely strong and powerful in his denial today. And what he did is an incredible offer; he offered to have the people working on the case come and work with their investigators with respect to the 12 people. I think that's an incredible offer.

Okay? Thank you. Yes, please.

President Putin. I'd like to add something to this. After all, I was an intelligence officer myself, and I do know how dossiers are made up. Just a quick—just a second. That's the first thing.

Now, the second thing: I believe that Russia is a democratic state, and I hope you're not denying this right to your own country. You're not denying that United States is a democracy. Do you believe the United States is a democracy? And if so, if it is a democratic state, then the final conclusion in this kind of dispute can only be delivered by a trial by the court, not by the executive—by the law enforcement.

For instance, the Concord company that was brought up is being accused—it's been accused of interference. But this company does not constitute the Russian state. It does not represent the Russian state. And I brought several examples before.

Well, you have a lot of individuals in the United States—take George Soros, for instance—with multibillion capitals, but it doesn't make him—his position, his posture—the posture of the United States? No, it does not. Well, it's the same case. There is the issue of trying a case in the court, and the final say is for the court to deliver.

We are now talking about the private—the individuals, and not about particular states. And as far as the most recent allegation is concerned about the Russian intelligence officers, we do have an intergovernmental treaty. Please, do send us the request. We will analyze it properly, and we'll send a formal response.

And as I said, we can extend this cooperation, but we should do it on a reciprocal basis, because we would await our Russian counterparts to provide us access to the persons of interest for us who we believe can have something to do with intelligence services.

Let's discuss the specific issues, and not use the Russia and the U.S. relationship as a loose change—the loose change for this internal political struggle.

Investigation Into Russia's Interference in 2016 Presidential Election

Q. My question for President—for President Putin. Thank you. Two questions for you, sir. Can you tell me what President Trump may have indicated to you about officially recognizing Crimea as part of Russia?

And then secondly, sir, do you—does the Russian Government have any compromising material on President Trump or his family?

President Putin. [Laughter] President Trump and—well, the posture of President Trump on Crimea is well known, and he stands firmly by it. He continued to maintain that it was illegal to annex it. We—our viewpoint is different. We held a referendum in strict compliance with the U.N. Charter and the international legislation. For us, this issue—we—[inaudible]—to this issue.

And now to the compromising material. Yes, I did heard these rumors that we allegedly collected compromising material on Mr. Trump when he was visiting Moscow. Now, distinguished colleague, let me tell you this: When President Trump visit Moscow back then, I didn't even know that he was in Moscow. I treat President Trump with utmost respect. But back then, when he was a private individual, a businessman, nobody informed me that he was in Moscow.

Well, let's take St. Petersburg Economic Forum, for instance. There were over 500 American businessmen—the high-ranking, the high-level ones. I don't even remember the last names of each and every one of them. Well, do you remember—do you think that we try to collect compromising material on each and every single one of them? Well, it's difficult to imagine an utter nonsense of a bigger scale than this.

Well, please, just disregard these issues and don't think about this anymore again.

President Trump. And I have to say, if they had it, it would have been out long ago. And if anybody watched Peter Strzok testify over the last couple of days—and I was in Brussels watching it—it was a disgrace to the FBI, it was a disgrace to our country, and, you would say, that was a total witch hunt.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:10 p.m. at the Presidential Palace. In his remarks, the President referred to Chairman of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong Un of North Korea; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; 2016 Democratic Presidential nominee Hillary Rodham Clinton; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; Director of National Intelligence Daniel R. Coats; and Federal Bureau of Investigation agent Peter P. Strzok II, in

his former capacity as lead investigator of former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's use of a private e-mail server and the investigation into Russia's interference in the 2016 Presidential election. President Putin referred to U.S. Department of Justice Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III; William F. Browder, chief executive officer, Hermitage Capital Management; and George Soros, chairman, Soros Fund Management, LLC. He also referred to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. A reporter referred to Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo. President Putin, the moderator, and two reporters spoke in Russian, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Joint news conferences :: Russia, President Putin.

Locations: Helsinki, Finland.

Names: Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Coats, Daniel R.; Kim Jong Un; Merkel, Angela; Netanyahu, Benjamin; Niinistö, Sauli; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Sanders, Sarah Huckabee; Strzok, Peter P., II; Trump, Barron W.; Trump, Melania.

Subjects: Communications : News media :: Accuracy and fairness; Energy : Domestic sources; Finland : President; Finland : President Trump's visit; Foreign policy, U.S. : Diplomatic efforts, expansion; Germany : Chancellor; Germany : Energy cooperation with Russia; Intelligence, Office of the Director of National; Iran : Nuclear weapons development; Iran : Regional involvement; Israel : Prime Minister; Israel : Relations with U.S.; Justice, Department of : Bureau of Investigation, Federal; North Korea : Chairman, State Affairs Commission; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; Russia : 2016 U.S. elections, interference; Russia : 2018 FIFA World Cup; Russia : Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.; Russia : Energy cooperation with Germany; Russia : President; Russia : Relations with U.S.; Russia : Security cooperation with U.S.; Sports : FIFA World Cup; Syria : Civil war and sectarian conflict; Syria : Refugees, humanitarian situation; Terrorism : Global threat; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Press Secretary.

DCPD Number: DCPD201800488.