

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

ASPEN SECURITY FORUM 2017

ACTIVE MEASURES: THE KREMLIN PLAN TO BEAT THE WEST WITHOUT  
FIRING A SHOT

Thursday, July 20, 2017

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

NED PRICE

Former Senior Assistant to President Obama

EVELYN FARKAS

Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for  
Russia/Ukraine/Eurasia

JULIA IOFFE

Columnist, *The Atlantic*

JIM SCIUTTO

Chief National Security Correspondent, CNN

\* \* \* \* \*

ACTIVE MEASURES: THE KREMLIN PLAN TO BEAT THE WEST WITHOUT  
FIRING A SHOT

(01:15 p.m.)

SPEAKER: Ladies and gentlemen, our next panel is ready to begin. Our next panel is really dealing with the issue of our time, one that as you can tell, as you may have noticed, cuts through almost everything that we've discussed so far today. We know now beyond a doubt that Russia successfully intervened in our election and tried to shape our democratic process. And the key questions are: What are Russia's broader aims and what can we do to protect ourselves?

We have a superb panel to address these questions. Let me introduce them to you. Ned Price -- you guys would just raise your hand, make sure people know who you are -- Ned Price, former senior assistant to President Obama and a career CIA officer. Evelyn Farkas, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia with vast experience on Capitol Hill, the executive branch and the academy. And Julia Ioffe of *The Atlantic*, one of the country's most prolific and incisive authors on Russia. And our great moderator Jim Sciutto of CNN, I'm sure very familiar to all of you. Jim reports and provides analysis at CNN on all of the network's platforms on all aspects of national security.

So let me turn things over to Jim Sciutto.

(Applause)

MR. SCIUTTO: Thank you. As much as it pains me to do this, I should also note that both Evelyn and Ned are contributors to NBC -- MSNBC. Credit where credit is due. You'll notice at a previous iteration had Peter Clement from the CIA. And that is not Ned Price. A previous-previous iteration had Sergey Kislyak. And I've asked Ned to play the role of Sergey Kislyak today, which he has agreed.

MR. PRICE: To my best. No one will remember anything.

MR. SCIUTTO: All questions from the audience directed to Russia go to Ned.

So, I mean it's certainly a lot to talk about. One thing that strikes me just as since I arrived 24 hours ago at this conference is hearing current administration officials that asked how they rectify the official government and intelligence agencies position on Russian interference in the election, rectify that with the President's public and comments, if not to the contrary, often expressing doubts that his own most senior advisers do not have and at times, you know, delivering something of a confusing message. I want to ask Julia because you know Russia very well, how does Russia read that counterpoint, that dissonance between what the President says about it in public, and we don't know what truly he said in private to Putin, and then what the agencies and his senior advisers say about Russian interference?

MS. IOFFE: Well, this is why they like Trump. They think that he has -- he brings a fresh view on Russia to Washington. And as one person close to the Russian foreign minister told me, right now Trump is Gulliver tied down by the Lilliputians. He's trying to establish better relations with the Russians but the Washington establishment, the national security foreign policy establishments in Washington that hate Russia in the Russian's view and -- I think that's pretty accurate -- are not letting him, are not giving him room to maneuver. And he's expressing the line that they obviously agree with and trying as much as he can to get rid of the ropes tying him down. Which is also why you see these, you know, impromptu meetings very secretly on the side of the G20 -- on the sidelines of the G20, allegedly the President's son-in-law attempting to open up a back channel with the Russians. I think the view is that you just want to -- you want to bypass and circumvent the national security establishment because they hate Russia anyway, they have a very fixed view on things and it's keeping everything frozen in place.

MR. SCIUTTO: Do they see that as an advantage?

MS. IOFFE: What as an advantage?

MR. SCIUTTO: As an advantage that they have an American leader who doesn't take a hard line on the interference?

MS. IOFFE: Absolutely. But right now I think they're very frustrated because they haven't really gotten that -- as much as they thought they would have gotten by this point with President Trump because again he's tied down by the Lilliputians.

MR. SCIUTTO: Right. Evelyn, I know you said to me as we were preparing for this that it was your view that President had a year to deliver in effect. Explain what you mean by that.

MS. FARKAS: It's because, Jim -- well, first of all I should say thank you very much to our organizers Clark and Walter Isaacson, Jane Harman, everyone who made this great conference possible.

I would say the reason I say that is because Vladimir Putin is going to announce that he's going to run again for reelection as president of Russia next year, early next year. And that's why I figured he has about -- Trump and Putin have about a year together to make some new cooperation. The reason for this is because when Putin first came to power, and I think everybody here knows the story of, you know, he made a deal with the Russian people that they would get borscht in their bowl, their economic situation would get better. That of course is no longer possible. Now he's on the nationalist -- he's got the nationalist bargain with the Russian people, "I'm going to make Russia great again. You're going to feel great about being Russian." And that means that he has to use nationalism in his campaign when he's running again. And the flipside of his nationalism is an anti-Western, anti-American and anti-liberal democracy kind of rhetoric. And I don't see that sitting very well with our government and even with our President. So I think that the timeline, and even the Russians themselves you've heard the Kremlin spokeswoman saying, or I think actually the foreign ministry spokeswoman saying "We're at the 6

month mark." They're very much aware of the timetable. And that's why I said the year.

MR. SCIUTTO: So as you -- what would be in that category what would be considered wins from -- if for instance the removing of sanctions is too high a bar, what would Russia consider a win in terms of we are getting pay off?

MS. FARKAS: Well, what the Russians want, I'll start with that, globally, I mean they would like freedom of action, they would like to go back to 19th century's fear of influence certainly in Eastern Europe and in Central Asia, the former Soviet space, but they also would like it in Syria and other places. So I think the first place where we see the maximum likelihood for some kind of deal between the United States and Russia that would be a cooperative deal would be in Syria. I don't know what that is. But we see signs, if indeed it's true that now we've removed our funding from the CIA-backed forces in Syria, that certainly would be a concession to Russia which would lead Russia to be even more stronger at the negotiating table because ultimately this will all be solved -- this being the Syrian civil war -- will be solved at a table, at a negotiating table.

MS. IOFFE: Can I just jump in here? The sanctions bar I think was not very high. You had Mike Flynn, the former national security advisor, very short lived, promising, essentially in December, that the sanctions imposed by outgoing President Obama would be essentially the shortest lived U.S. sanctions ever and here we are six months later nothing has happened. And you see the Russians are extremely, extremely frustrated by the expulsion of their diplomats/espionage people and the seizure of their compounds. And they're making extremely anti-American statements calling Americans highway robbers etc., threatening retaliation finally. It's kind of, you know, a delayed reaction, finally threatening retaliation to those last Obama sanctions.

MR. SCIUTTO: And you've mentioned stories that are not so positive about the administration, little kind of warning shots. Ned?

MR. PRICE: If I could just add on to that. I mean we can all argue about whether the election of Donald Trump was actually a win for Vladimir Putin. I mean there's clearly a case to be made that it was given President Trump's pro Russia stance from the outset. But there's a countervailing case that maybe it wasn't. Obviously President Trump faces a lot of political pressure. And everything he does vis-à-vis Russia is now under a microscope. But I think in another way, this Putin has already endured possibly the greatest win he could have ever imagined. The fact that there is a panel here that we are talking about Vladimir Putin as a master strategist or master tactician, and obviously this is not a singular experience, this has been repeated over and over at Aspen and other prominent forums, what Vladimir Putin wanted just about as much as anything else if not more was to be on par with the United States. He was infuriated when President Obama called Russia a regional power. He wanted to be the superpower. He wanted to be what the Soviet Union was in its glory days. And in a way he has put himself on par with President Trump who spent nearly four hours with him at the G20.

MS. FARKAS: Yeah.

MR. SCIUTTO: I want to get to this sort of strategic win versus tactical win for him because I know there's some debate about that. But before we get there, I remember I was sitting on the same stage this time last year with Director Clapper two-and-a-half some odd months before the I.C. officially named Russia, but he was all but naming Russia as being responsible. And he said at the time, and again before the I.C. had assessed that they believe Russia actually intended not just to disrupt but to aid Trump over Clinton, he said that a lot of the driving force was just embarrass U.S. democracy, embarrass the U.S. political process. So if we're asking this question did Russia win -- is this a victory for them, on that point would you say, and I leave this to whoever wants to pipe in first that that in itself, I mean just the back and forth and the questions and the, you know, the doubting of the intelligence community and the fake news etc., can you say on that goal at least Putin already won?

MS. IOFFE: I think that when we talk about Russia having a singular goal or a singular way of achieving that goal, we are mischaracterizing Russia. I think the Russians start with a maximalist position and then, you know, if they get some of it, they're okay with that. I think there were many goals in what they did in 2016. One was to make us look foolish. One was to discredit democracy in part because of their -- for domestic reasons and for the situation in the so-called near abroad the former Soviet states and in Eastern Europe, right. You had after 1991, after the end of the Cold War, the global consensus was that liberal democracy is better and it works and the Russian, the Soviet way of doing things doesn't work and it's immoral and it's bad. And you had all these -- you had Russians and you had former Soviet republics and Eastern European people striving to be to change their societies and to some modicum of this liberal democratic order. Now he's showing, "Look at the liberal democratic order. It's not so hot, is it? And maybe our way of doing things is a bit better. Maybe you don't have as much freedom but things are more stable. You don't have to worry so much about what comes tomorrow." So that's one motive. Then there is Hillary Clinton that, you know, there's definitely no love lost there. I just don't think there's a singular motive and a singular like this is what we're doing, A, B, C, D.

MS. FARKAS: But I do think clearly we're all -- we are fighting with one another. Our democracy does look weaker at the moment. And I think our President is treating, you know, Putin again as not -- not even as an equal, almost as if Russia is a stronger country than the United States, it's baffling. I'm sure if you polled Americans they would think that Russia is like the number two economy rather than number nine by GDP. So I think that's a win for them that maybe they didn't even foresee.

The other thing is the language of relativism, you know, that we also kill people kind of line that Trump uses. That he's adopted a lot of this Kremlin tactics and the language that they use domestically in the United States. And that's very dangerous because all you need to



do is look at what's happened to truth in Russia and, you know, very much wish that that doesn't happen here.

MR. SCIUTTO: Fake news and the very existence of facts. Inconvenient information is deemed questionable.

MS. IOFFE: And early on I have to say it wasn't -- Ned and I were talking about this the other day, it wasn't just to raise up Trump and hurt Hillary, it was also, for example, Russian media, I was in Russia last spring and if you watched Russian state TV, that it was also all about Bernie Sanders and how great Bernie Sanders was and how great -- how terrible the other Republicans were. So it was Trump and Sanders. It was like the two outsiders that they were really gunning for.

MS. FARKAS: And they also had Jill -- I forget her last already --

MS. IOFFE: Jill Stein.

MS. FARKAS: -- at the RT dinner.

MS. IOFFE: Yeah.

MR. SCIUTTO: Yeah.

MR. PRICE: In some ways though I would make the point that it's almost difficult to disaggregate the effects and implications of the Russian active measures from what we saw during the course of the 2016 campaign. It was novel in a way that we had a Republican nominee and later -- and before that a Republican contender who used some of the same language that the Russian propaganda started using in 2015 and escalated in 2016 talking about a rigged system, talking about in the context of the primary having, you know, all of Colorado's delegates go to Ted Cruz even though, you know, they essentially split the vote. And then of course as the election itself became closer, a focus on again a rigged system, Hillary could steal the election, then Republican nominee Trump may not honor the election results.

So, obviously the Russian active measures had an effect. But I think even in their absence, the Russians would have been gleeful at what they saw as, you know, perhaps an unwitting accomplice, we hope an unwitting accomplice, in the form of Donald Trump in some ways doing the same work they sought to do.

MR. SCIUTTO: Yeah, it's been interesting to me the one point you will hear from Russia and sometimes folks not just in the outright world but in Trump world and in WikiLeaks, which we know at least the I.C. has deemed to be the intentional cutout for the release of these stolen documents and materials. You know, almost the same language you will hear criticizing whoever the opponent or target is of the day. I mean even with regards to CNN. I mean WikiLeaks will tweet something about CNN that is almost identical to what you're hearing coming from the White House, even phraseology and same. Some of the Russian embassy's very active Twitter accounts in the U.K. or the U.S. will parrot language that you hear. So what you talked about, it wasn't just during the campaign, it's today that you have a common message.

MR. PRICE: Well -- go ahead.

MS. IOFFE: No, I was just going to say because I love to make this point because it drives me crazy when former director call me and says the Russians are coming back. To your point, they never left.

MR. SCIUTTO: Right.

MS. FARKAS: I mean they're still here, they still have all that information. They are in our cyber and in our information sphere.

MR. PRICE: And it's broader I think than just WikiLeaks and the overt or semi-overt organs of the Russian governments. I think one thing that we've noticed even after the election, you take what -- the sort of trending story and Alt-Right, so-called the Alt-Right circles in this country after that April 4th chemical attack in Syria and the #SyriaHoax started in Russia and with pro Bashar al-Assad new site and somehow made its way

to the United States and started trending in some of the same circles that now are collectively known as the Alt-Right. And I think this sort of linkage between the two is not something I'm sure we fully understand, how something jumps across the Atlantic like that and tends to land with the same group of people after originating in pro Russian circles.

MR. SCIUTTO: You're delicately wading into this -- a topic there which is the question of, whatever you want to call it, collusion cooperation, whether witting or unwitting. Obviously a wadded question, based on what you've seen particularly in the last week, where is -- you are former CIA officer, you had to make a judgment to your boss, write him a report saying based on what I've seen is there a case to be made here, where do you stand on that?

MR. PRICE: Well, you know, frankly I was surprised that there would be, you know, explicit documentary evidence pointing to what could be, you know, collusion or conspiracy. Obviously there's a lot that we don't know about where that meeting went, if it died on the vine there or if there were subsequent conversations. But I would make a point that a former colleague of mine has made and speaking about collusion in plain sight, which I think is something that we often overlook in this context. Yes, there could be covert collusion that Bob Mueller and his team are looking at. But let's talk about what we know.

You know Roger Stone talked openly about speaking with officials from WikiLeaks and knew somehow in advance that, as he put it, John Podesta's time in the barrel would soon be here. But I think more alarmingly you had the Republican nominee in the final months -- in the final month of the campaign alone 164 times cite WikiLeaks, you know, rave about WikiLeaks, I love WikiLeaks. He talked about Hillary's missing emails. He most explicitly said Russia, if you're listening, we hope you can find them. So there's this covert collusion which is, again, I think the jury is still out. But I think we also have to factor in overt collusion. And, you know, I'm not a lawyer but my understanding of the law is that conspiracy need not be hidden from the public in order to

be a crime. And so I think we need to look at this holistically when we talk about what may have gone on in the 2016 election.

MR. SCIUTTO: Looks like you wanted to --

MS. FARKAS: No, I would agree with that. I actually am nodding in agreement.

MR. SCIUTTO: What about the argument though that, listen, I mean there's collusion and then there's -- well, you could say maybe shared interests, right. They could have a more innocent, I mean not a friendly interpretation, right. Do you -- how do you respond to that?

MR. PRICE: So, just quickly, I would say it's certainly possible. But I think what makes that less likely is what we know had transpired behind closed doors from Roger Stone to the June -- early June meeting and then of course what we don't know. So if it were just the overt, you know, extolling of WikiLeaks, that would be one thing. But I think when you marry these two together, it paints a much more sinister picture.

MS. FARKAS: And there are too many -- I'm sorry -- there are too many unanswered questions. I mean, you know, we forget there are so many meetings by so many Americans and, you know, we still don't know what was Jared Kushner discussing with Sergey Gorkov, the head of this bank that's sanctioned by the United States that he can't do any business with, you know. And right there in the transition time period and what was he doing setting up this mechanism and why are they always trying to hide these meetings.

So I think the unanswered questions lead us more towards suspecting that there's some sort of collusion.

MS. IOFFE: The outstanding question that I still have is the one that popped into my head when this first came on our radar is the Russia I know didn't know what the DNC was and it certainly didn't know what the DCCC was. And if you watched, you know, for example them trying to, for example the START treaty when it was signed

in 2010, I believe, and Obama said, "Okay, now I have to take this to Congress," and Putin was furious. He said, "What do you mean you have to take it to Congress? I too have Congress," you know. They have -- they didn't really have a good understanding for how our political system worked. They are -- they were so far behind in terms of lobbying on the Hill. They -- and then all of a sudden, you know, they wander into the DCCC servers, they know which precincts in Florida to target, you know, where to disseminate information, false information about Hillary Clinton to drive down voter turnout. Where did they get so smart all of a sudden?

MR. SCIUTTO: Well, let me -- and I know that we know we've reported that that's part of the current investigation looking at Jared Kushner's data analytics, his famous data analytics. But is it really that hard to figure out where to target? I mean couldn't you or I just subscribe to the Cook Political Report and say that I need to target, you know, District 34 in southern Michigan? I mean is it that -- I'm curious, you guys have all been in politics for a while. When I've heard that, I say, "Well, is it that, you know, scientific to figure out where to send the best fake news and so on?"

MS. IOFFE: It's not if you're -- you know, if you're in the soup of Washington and you're constantly hearing about it. But, for example, in the DNI report that came out in January, the illegals were mentioned. I don't know if you remember redheaded hottie Anna Chapman -  
-

MS. FARKAS: Yeah.

MS. IOFFE: --from the summer of 2010, you know, these embedded spies that the Americans were based on, they were here apparently to monitor the 2008 election. And the things they were doing were laughable. It was, you know -- it was the Pink Panther. Like Anna Chapman went to buy a burner phone in Brooklyn and she registered it to a fake address which was 99 Fake Street. I'm not kidding.

(Laughter)

MS. IOFFE: You know, they were going to think tank events and reading newspapers and radioing back to Moscow. So this is -- like it's not hard but for some reason they were not very good at it before.

MR. SCIUTTO: Big picture just for a moment. You know, we asked question others are asking, did Russia win or -- more properly, is Russia winning or losing in this sort of the game? But is the more appropriate question is the U.S. losing, right, in that regardless of what Russia's intentions are, the loss of confidence. You know, we talk a lot about and Director Clapper referenced this last year, a broad societal loss of confidence in institutions, right. We see that, god knows, the media, Congress, etc., but also now the electoral process. And not just, you know, questions and no evidence of voter tally interference but people ask questions now about it. And that's an insidious process over time. Is that really the question? You know, is the U.S. losing it? And from your point of view have we effectively lost something from this?

MS. IOFFE: I think we have, but it's not necessarily the Russians doing. I think we give the Russians a little bit too much credit. And we did a lot of this to ourselves. Also we don't have to subscribe to the Russian framework for seeing how -- so when they see, you know, closed hearings and headlines and leaks, they think, "Wow, it's a circus," and "Look at us, we're so stable, we don't leak at all." To me, that's strength. You know, that's our democratic system working and fighting back and trying to right whatever wrongs may or may not have happened.

They also didn't create Donald Trump. And they didn't create the suspicion toward elites and toward Washington.

MR. SCIUTTO: And the divisive political environment.

MS. IOFFE: Yes. They didn't create Fox News. They also didn't create the Electoral College, which by

the way help -- tremendously helped the Russians. You know, you can meddle with a few votes in a key state in a key precinct and it has a massively outsized effect because of how the Electoral College is structured. They didn't create any of these things. And it's not up to them. We can sanction them. We can punish them. We can fret about our loss of standing abroad and questions about our democracy. Or we can, you know, kind of shut them out of our brains and think about ourselves and think about how we -- what we did to get here.

MS. FARKAS: I mean I think domestically we have lost a lot in terms of our own confidence in democracy and that is a win for Putin, sadly. But I think internationally there the harm that we've inflicted upon ourselves has been because of, frankly speaking, who we have in the White House running our foreign policy because our foreign policy is something that has alarmed, put off, enraged various allies and partners around the world. And so whether it's withdrawing or taking some action that they don't agree with, it's been counterproductive in as much as we've, again, lost friends, lost allies, lost standing.

MS. IOFFE: And Putin didn't do that. Putin isn't, you know, making Trump cozy up to Sisi, or Duterte and snub Merkel.

MS. FARKAS: Right.

MR. PRICE: Call me an optimist, but you know I think we can fix what ails our country. I think, to Evelyn's point, the much more permanent or enduring damage will be the collateral damage. The collateral damage to NATO, the collateral damage to the transatlantic relationship, the collateral damage to multilateralism, some of which has been inflicted as a result of, you know, the strange bedfellows that are Putin and Trump, but partially just President Trump.

I think what we can't fix is the notion that I think a lot of our allies previously didn't accept that the United States in all of our history and might could elect a demagogue. I mean once we've crossed that

threshold, there's no putting that genie back in the box. And I think there will be profound doubt going forward. I think there was remarkable confidence in the United States that we would ultimately do the right thing, whether it came to discrete policy decisions or national elections. And I think we may have, you know, lost that latter category even if we can address sort of the institutional challenges that we faced more recently.

MS. FARKAS: And I would one up him on the optimism because I do think ultimately I really firmly believe, you know, I'm the child of Hungarian refugees who came to this country for democracy, for economic opportunity, and so I believe that our institutions will prevail our judiciary, the fourth estate, the media, what you guys are doing is really important. So it will take some time and we definitely we're in a rut right now in terms of our international standing as far as being the standard for liberal democracy, but I think we can regain that. It just will take time.

MR. SCIUTTO: I do want to get more to optimism. Before we do, the current battle space as it were, I don't speak to a single person in the homeland security world, IC world, Democrat or Republican, who is confident in the current response to current interference from Russia probing attacks, many of them continuing to probe voter registration systems, etc. And we're hearing in Director Kelly -- Secretary Kelly, rather, said this yesterday that the states are resisting in fact federal help. You know, understandably so, there's a political reason for it. But it's kind of like no one's really doing anything, right? I mean they are talking about it but no one is doing anything about it.

What are -- I'm going to start with you, Julia, because you know Russia, they did not mess with voter tallies in 2016. Do you think that's a step that they take in 2018 or 2020? Because you would -- again, you don't have to do it. What do we have, 40,000 voting districts in the country, you don't have to do that in 40,000, you could do it in 50 or 10, you know.

MS. IOFFE: Well, that's what I'm saying is that



you don't even need to -- first of all, I don't know, it's also kind of are we 100 percent sure that they didn't do anything.

MS. FARKAS: Right.

MS. IOFFE: And second of all, you don't need to mess with the tallies if you're doing other things and if you're -- you know, I was in -- in September I was in Kent, Ohio and a Bernie voter, then Jill Stein voter, was telling me about a story she saw about Hillary Clinton having Parkinson's but for some reason having no tremors and how does she do that. And by the way, she saw that on Russia Today. And is that any different than NPR, which also gets government funding.

So, you know, she -- you don't -- like you said, you don't need to mess with every single precinct, you don't even need to mess with a single precinct, you can turn off voters in a key district in Ohio and because -- again, because of the Electoral College that can have a massively disproportionate effect.

MR. SCIUTTO: Did you -- in your job, and I know you left in 2015, but I bet I'll ask you the same question, as we have said before this and you referenced earlier in the chat now, it's not the first time a foreign power has interfered in different ways, right, China in 2008, so on. But the difference here is the weaponization of the information.

Did you -- but in the past, have you seen China or Russia or North Korea or Iran that the key cyber players lay the groundwork for voter interference, you know, I don't know, blow up some registration list so people when they show up, they are not -- have you seen evidence of that?

MS. FARKAS: So my job was in the Department of Defense, so I would not have necessarily come across that unless it was in some bigger or more comprehensive report. But I think the point that I would like to make is that, you know, the Russian government is opportunistic. Putin is opportunistic and he's a risk taker.

So to answer your question about do you think that Putin would actually go further and get into the roles, yes if he sees the opportunity and he sees that we're not that -- there will be no price to pay, that we're not standing up to him. Then he will. Then he might -- I shouldn't say he will, I don't know for sure, but he would assess the risk as being relatively low and the gain being as relatively high. And this is across the board, it's not just in the cyber realm.

You know in the Department of Defense since actually 2012, I mean we've been talking, at least among ourselves in the government, about deterring Russia. Because if you don't stand up to this Kremlin, then they won't stop. I mean the first, you know, invasion and occupation of one of their neighboring countries happened in 2008. And they're likely to -- they repeated it of course we know in Ukraine and to different parts of eastern Ukraine and illegally annexed, illegally changed the borders by force, by military force, first time since World War II. And there's a whole litany of other things. I have like 12 things on a list of my pocket that I could read to you. But the reason that they kept doing these things and to this day they're still moving the border in Georgia and again I can make another list of 12 things they've done since Trump came into office, they don't stop because the price is not high enough.

So we have to deter them in the cyber realm, in the conventional military realm, in the asymmetric military unconventional realm, in the information space. And some of that will involve the private sector. Some of it will involve increasing transparency and tightening up our laws, setting up task forces for electoral reform and vigilance in DHS and other places, task force on Russia to look at the dark -- the dark side interfacing with the white side, if you will, in the financial world, in the cyber criminal world. So that's a long answer to your question.

MR. SCIUTTO: But you can -- to that point, you can argue that the previous administration did not get the make them pay for balance right either.

MS. FARKAS: I am on the record advocating for us doing more on deterrence. And certainly with regard to the information operation against our election, I was no longer in government but I believe we should have done more. So to undo those sanctions out of the four different buckets of sanctions we have I think would be appalling because we actually need to do more.

MR. SCIUTTO: Ned, do you want to jump in?

MR. PRICE: Yeah. So going back to the 2016 election, I think in your question it seemed to be baked in an assumption that the Russians were not going to try to meddle with ballots to alter vote counts. And that is not true. The --

MR. SCIUTTO: You mean they attempted to?

MR. PRICE: No, no. There was never an assumption that they wouldn't try and go there.

MR. SCIUTTO: Right.

MR. PRICE: There was never an assumption that they had a baked in red line and they wouldn't go past that. And so I think that's important to understand the response that the Obama administration undertook, understanding that the paramount objective was to ensure the integrity of the vote itself. And that is why there were a series of both public and private warnings to the Russians starting on August 4th with Director Brennan to his colleague, Bortnikov, in Moscow that culminated in October 31st when we sent the final message via a longstanding nuclear channel warning the Russians not to do this. Accompanying that was concerted work with the states, 48 of which ultimately worked with DHS to protect their systems.

But -- so it was not a given that we would not be there in 2016. And so I think it cannot be a given that the Russians won't try and go there in 2018 or 2020. This is, to my knowledge, the first time that an adversary has used essentially active measures in the context of an

election. And Donald Trump strangely has spoken of the North Koreans and others meddling in prior elections. Perhaps others are familiar with that, I'm not.

But, you know, when you look at what the Russians have done in the past, vis-à-vis our elections, Julia mentioned the director had asked officer who was tasked to monitor the 2008 election in that same generate 2017 report. There's also an example of the Russian's recruitment of a Democratic Party activist in the 1970s to gain intelligence on Jimmy Carter's campaign.

So this is, you know, certainly a modernization of that tactic. And I think we can be sure that when 2018 and 2020 especially rolls around they will have developed even newer and more novel tactics and perhaps they will be bolder. And I agree that should, especially should Congress not act on the sanctions bill that is now languishing in the House that passed Senate with 98 eight votes, I think that will send a very strong message to Vladimir Putin, especially coupled with the perhaps tepid message he may have received from Donald Trump at the G20 that the green light is on.

MR. SCIUTTO: I want to go to audience questions but I just want to ask one more big picture question. There are a lot of very serious people, some who are at this conference who are serious about fighting off the next attack from whatever country it comes from, Russia, etc. At the same time, as I mentioned when I started, you have a commander-in-chief who at least in public doesn't express any sort of great urgency about it or even conviction that it was Russia who did it. And I just was going to recount that a diplomat, from a country that I won't name, described a conversation between his head of state, from a country I won't name, with the President where the President in that conversation disagreed with -- or dismissed what his Secretary of State said. He said, "Well, Secretary Tillerson says that, but I'm the President," on a major national security issue, not election meddling.

How can -- I mean, our partners but also domestic agencies responsible for this or states or even

lawmakers take the effort seriously if the commander -- or pursue it seriously if the commander-in-chief is not behind it?

MS. FARKAS: That's a huge flaw. And again, as Julie said, not to be put at the door of Vladimir Putin. I mean, unfortunately this is the way our President manages because he should put people in place who agree with him or at least are going to agree with him once he makes a decision. In this case, of course, for people like me, I'm quite happy to see reasonable people who agree with my overall perspective on Russia in cabinet positions across our government, pushing back, trying to educate our President and trying to at least do no harm and perhaps defend us better. I mean, I would imagine they want to defend us better. But I think the President can be an obstacle in this. And I think that puts us in a dangerous situation.

MR. SCIUTTO: Ned or Julia, before we go to the audience?

MR. PRICE: So I would make the point when it comes to states working with the federal government to fortify their systems. You know a lot has been made of how the Obama administration tried to be bipartisan in its approach to responding to this. And I think the point that has been lost is that we didn't pursue by bipartisanship as a virtue in and of itself. Bipartisanship, we saw, as an avenue to secure states like Georgia and some of the other southern states especially that may have been resistant to working with the federal government on something as sensitive as electoral infrastructure, working with Congress to have a bipartisan statement, Democrats and Republicans coming together urging states to work with the federal government.

And even that, even with that that ultimately came around after it was rebuffed by senior members of Congress, even that only led to 48 states. You would think on a challenge as dire and significant as this that all 50 states would be jumping at this offer. But I think it speaks to the need for elected officials from both parties to really sing from the same sheet of music when

it comes to the states.

MR. SCIUTTO: I still want to hear who those two states are, but DHS won't say. Julia?

MS. IOFFE: Yeah. I was just going to say, again, that's not Russia's fault that you have Mitch McConnell just because it's President Obama coming to him and asking him for cooperation on this. You know the Russians didn't make McConnell an obstructionist who hated President Obama. They didn't make certain states not cooperative with DHS. Again, a lot of this, the Russians are kind of -- I mean, there's a lot of talk about counterterrorism at this forum. In some ways the Russians are terrorists. They're using --

MR. SCIUTTO: Fear.

MS. IOFFE: Well, no, they're using loopholes in our society that are usually strengths, right, the same way the 9/11 hijackers weaponized, you know, freedom of travel, student visas, things like that against us. The Russians are doing the same thing in the sense of, you know, they are weaponizing our federalist system, our -- the partisanship baked into our system. Again, they didn't do that. They're just weaponizing what we have.

MS. FARKAS: You said fear. Yes, they use fear. And I think that's the dangerous aspect of this because speaking from the military sort of -- from the military portfolio that I used to have or the defense portfolio, the Russians, their military doctrine is very dangerous because it's built on fear and this escalation -- escalate to deescalate doctrine, which I won't get into in detail, but the point is that they'll do something so outrageous that we will be back on our heels, we will be afraid that they'll escalate further.

In the context of the cyber, you know, the information operation against our elections, one of -- possibly one of the reasons I can't get in President Obama's head but I can well imagine based on conversations we had in other situations about Russian actions that he might have been concerned about escalation. So there

that's a fear that the Russians will escalate. So I think they are terrorists also in that respect.

MR. SCIUTTO: Fear and doubt, I suppose you can say. So let's go to the audience now if you don't mind. I see some on the way back here and I think there's a mic near you, yeah it's coming right behind you.

I just asked you so we could get more in -- shorter questions means more --

MR. WEINSTEIN: My name is Jamie Weinstein from the creatively named The Jamie Weinstein Show podcast.

(Laughter)

MR. WEINSTEIN: My question --

MR. SCIUTTO: Good plug, good plug.

MR. WEINSTEIN: -- deals with the centrality of Vladimir Putin to Russia's current kind of aggressive geopolitical stance in the world. If Vladimir Putin -- excuse me -- would disappear from the world tomorrow, whoever took over, likely to take over continue this posture in the world or is Vladimir Putin the one who's directing kind of this aggressive stance, not building up the Russian economy in a way that's sustainable or is it institutional, that whether he's there or not this kind of aggressive stance would continue?

MR. SCIUTTO: You want to take that?

MS. IOFFE: I love this question. Thank you, Jamie. I think we in America fall into this fallacy that if you just remove Putin democracy will flourish and all Russians just -- you know -- it's like riding a bike, they all just know how to do democracy and they will all do it. Russia is 143 million little Putins and --

(Laughter)

MR. SCIUTTO: Wow. Goodness.

MS. IOFFE: Even some people I love, I include in that category. It really -- it's baked into the culture, into the society. I think in some ways the Russia that we wanted to believe in that existed for nine years between 1991 and 2000 was a kind of macro historical blip and deviation.

And talking about places with deep states, you have like a lot of the structure in Russia, the reason this is working so well for them is a lot of the system has just been imported wholesale from the Soviet Union. The judges, the clandestine services, the military --

MR. SCIUTTO: The mob.

MS. IOFFE: The mob. The -- well, that's not really simple. But anyway, so like there is continuity and there is -- I keep thinking back to something that Vladimir Putin's advisor who helped him win his very first presidential campaign in 2000 and served with him for over a decade said, you know, when the system collapses and it will, it will collapse in a day and the system that replaces it will be exactly the same.

MR. SCIUTTO: It's remarkable. Evelyn?

MS. FARKAS: Yeah. I mean I think sort of from a political scientist perspective, the Kremlin -- I mean it's really the Kremlin, the institutions, the organizations, the culture, this -- it's kept together by the autocrat system obviously with this veneer of democracy over it and then this corrupt kleptocratic economic system. And I think even if you remove Putin, you would still have that system. Yes, you could get a Medvedev style person in the office of the president as we saw before who has a softer edge, who might give on a few things. But the system and the overall objectives of the country wouldn't change.

And I think that also gets to what you were saying, I suspect, is under the little Putins, the nationalism comment, the nationalism and the real kind of loss of the neo-imperial emotion is still very real in Russia because the trauma of losing their empire is still



very real and fresh. And, you know, it would be -- I mean, it's so real and fresh for the French for crying out loud and the Brits only got over theirs because we were like an extension of empire for them.

MS. IOFFE: And also, I just -- I'm sorry, and then I'll let Ned speak. But the Russians are more like Americans than we like to admit. They too like us think that they have a special role to play in history, that they are a great nation that has contributed greatly to Western society, that theirs is a mission given to them by God. And that they're not just some tiny country. They're not the Czech Republic.

MS. FARKAS: They're not just another European country.

MS. IOFFE: Exactly. They're -- and they are something larger than that. And the '90s were huge trauma for them. If you want to read something really good about that, I would really recommend reading *Secondhand Time* by Svetlana Alexievich who won the 2015 Nobel. And it's all about even people who suffered horribly under the Soviet system missing the system, missing that -- the sense of purpose that gave them a sense of mission, a sense that they were part of something larger. And in that Americans are very similar to.

MR. SCIUTTO: Yeah. The Christian West versus the hordes kind of view of the world which you saw some echoes of frankly in the President's Poland speech. Did you want to pipe in on that? You want to go to the next question?

MR. PRICE: I do see myself with those comments.

(Laughter)

MR. SCIUTTO: Okay, fair enough. How about you up in nearly the front?

MR. DENICK: My name is Drew Denick (phonetic) from the University of Texas at Austin. I first like to thank the stage for your service to our country. My

question is, we talked a lot about discourse, talked a lot about strife. How, given what the discourse is, given what the strife in our system is, what can we do across the board of our system to show strength to Russia to combat that?

MS. FARKAS: Okay. Sorry, it's your turn to talk. You go.

MR. PRICE: So I think one of the most important elements of this, especially as we look forward to 2018 and 2020, is developing antibodies that will help Americans and will be there as we see this come back towards us. I mean, again the optimist in me hopes that this was a onetime thing and Putin, you know, spent all of his ammunition on 2016 because I -- part of me wants to believe that it can never have the same effects because Americans are now much more familiar with what a foreign government's covert influence campaign looks like. It's been a topic of conversation since this summer essentially. And given this administration's foreign policy, I suspect it won't be going away.

So I think part of the response will be essentially baked into our psyches, I hope. Perhaps that's optimistic but --

MR. SCIUTTO: Can you argue that we are seeing that just to get too Pollyannaish here, but listen, you know, you're only six months in but a very divisive time, you have courts making difficult decisions and sometimes not always in the same vein. But you have a judicial system that's operating independently. You have a attorney general who recused himself, right, which the President clearly didn't like based on his interview yesterday. You have, if I could mention, media not being cowed by the, you know, by the threats from on high. Is it -- do you see some optimism in that Evelyn or do you --

MS. FARKAS: Yes. But I would add to that, I think the most important thing, if I could pick one word, and it used to be deterrence, but now it's transparency. Because what I've seen is it's really we have to fight against corruption in our country, in our electoral

process. And that starts from everything from, you know, NGOs. I also have NGO affiliation, the media, writ large, where there is money we need to know where it's coming from. We need to shed light on it. We need to outlaw things that we consider inappropriate foreign interference. We need to make people write down on paper who they're, you know, if they're lobbying the U.S. government on behalf of a foreign government. We need to tighten our laws. We need to enforce them. And among -- I mean basically it just comes down to transparency, getting rid of corruption.

MS. IOFFE: And we need to not get exhausted. And I'm probably just talking to myself up here, it's -- watching all this is exhausting because every day, every -- just watching the news is exhausting, forget like reporting it or commenting on it. This drip of crazy news stories coming out of Washington about the Russia story, about what this administration is doing, I think if -- you know, if I'm sick of it and I'm exhausted by it, I can imagine that people in like Tuscaloosa are thrilled to be getting the next, you know, New York Times push alert. So I think being vigilant against that, against indifference and exhaustion.

MR. PRICE: And Jim, Evelyn mentioned, I just want to go back to it. And you are more expert on this than I am. But the role of the media, and I think the media's behavior going forward will also -- I think has evolved and I think and hope that evolution will show through. But you look at what happened in 2016. The most vivid example of which was on October 7th when the U.S. government formally attributed the meddling to the senior most levels of the Russian government at 3:30 P.M. and then at 4:00 P.M. you have an Access Hollywood tape that comes out via the Washington Post. And then at 5:00 P.M. or later that afternoon, whatever it was, you have John Podesta's emails start to trickle out.

And I think what we observed, certainly what I observed, is that there was a lot of attention paid to that statement from during the 30-minute period from 3:30 to 4:00 P.M. but then it all went away. And from October 7th until November 8th, there were -- there was a media

frenzy on John Podesta's emails focused on the substance and the contents but not the origins.

MS. FARKAS: Right.

MS. IOFFE: And -- But to be fair, that day I actually happened to be having dinner with the Clinton campaign staffer. And all he could talk about was the Access Hollywood tape. And the Clinton campaign really emphasized not the October 7th statement but the Access Hollywood tape, so.

MR. PRICE: But it wasn't just a statement, it was -- and, you know, this term is loaded but the collusion on the part of certain elements in the media and Guccfer 2.0, the Russian cyber persona, who would send scoops to individual reporters and say, "Hey, you know, you should take a look at this." And then lo and behold, major media outlets would write on the scoops provided by this Russian intelligence officer.

MR. SCIUTTO: Collusion. You used the word collusion there --

MS. FARKAS: But I --

MR. SCIUTTO: Let me -- you used the word collusion, the media colluded with Russia.

MR. PRICE: Cooperation, collusion, whatever you want to call it, I mean it's, you know, certainly working with. I imagine all of the journalists were unwitting at the time, hopefully that's the case, but it was still certainly cooperation, collaboration, call it collusion, whatever you want.

MR. SCIUTTO: But that implies active or not witted -- not unwitting rather, that implies witting collusion --

MR. PRICE: I think it --

MR. SCIUTTO: Witting cooperation.

MR. PRICE: --in a certain point you had to have blinders and earmuffs on not to know that Guccfer 2.0 was a Russian intelligence official.

MR. SCIUTTO: Right.

MS. FARKAS: And I just want to say, I mean in defense of the Clinton campaign, and full disclosure, I was volunteering to help Hillary Clinton, I was actually upset because I was watching what was happening in the media. I paid close attention to that. But I didn't feel that the Clinton campaign actually fully understood what the Russians were doing and they didn't take it as seriously.

MS. IOFFE: That's true.

MS. FARKAS: And I wrote a couple op-eds saying President Obama please tell America, and part of what I was thinking also was and please tell the campaigns because they're not getting it. So I think part -- this gets back to my macro point or another macro point I make often, and these guys heard me say it earlier, which is that the intelligence community needs to get better at sharing information with the public and with our partners and allies, declassifying things that we need urgently. Because I think part of the problem was that that report that came out, I mean I was asked to comment on TV and a lot of reporters called me and said this is weird why is, this RT thing attached to it. And there was a lot of scoffing at the report too, which I thought was missing the point. Because it's not how the report looks and what was in it. I mean it's the message. It's what the Russians are trying to do.

And so I think the intelligence community needs to do a better job providing more information and declassifying. And I know we have to preserve our sources and methods. But at some point, you know, sometimes maybe you have to actually compromise some kind of source or method if it comes down to saving American democracy.

MR. SCIUTTO: Yeah, there was -- I remember the January report. I was a little disappointed. And you're

like, lift the veil a little more. So -- and I understand dealing with you guys that a lot of the stuff is very close hold.

Just because we're getting close to 5 minutes, I want to try to get it, I would love to get two more questions in. But we're going to go here, in the blue shirt here.

MR. DYLAN: Hi, Charlie Dylan (phonetic) --

MR. SCIUTTO: Him first and then we will come to you. But if you make it short -- no, no, you got the mic, and if you make it shot, we'll try to get both.

MR. DYLAN: Will do. Charlie Dylan from Duke Law. Jake Tapper interviewed Hillary Clinton during the campaign and she said that she had been contacted by foreign leaders wanting to endorse her to, quote, "stop Trump." Jake did press her a bit as to who they were but she won't disclose who these foreign leaders were.

I'm thinking, number one, did -- do we -- should we assume that they shut everything down and didn't try to do anything else to influence the campaign? And would it help if we broaden the discussion about all foreign nations who are trying to influence our campaigns or am I completely wrong?

MR. SCIUTTO: Do you see significant evidence of other governments, even friendly ones?

MR. PRICE: So I would start with the proposition that it's natural for governments to have policy preferences. Clearly I would suspect lots of the NATO member countries were made uncomfortable listening to Donald Trump during the campaign speak of NATO being obsolete.

So I think the issue is that in today's environment there has been an attempt at criminalization of policy preferences on the part of foreign capitals. But I think we have to remember it's a far cry from a NATO member country, you know, privately rooting for Hillary

Clinton and strategic adversary getting involved in our election with active measures, covert influence, social media, you name.

MS. IOFFE: They weren't probing and scanning our election infrastructure, yeah.

MR. SCIUTTO: Gentleman here. There's a mic right over your shoulder.

SPEAKER: Has any of you considered the business role of the President and Russia because he has -- right now no one will lend him money in New York City, no one will do business with him in New York City? He owes a great deal of money. Where does he get the money? And there are a lot of rumors that he gets in Russia. Have any of you explored any of that?

MS. FARKAS: Well, his son said they get most of their money or predominant amount of money --

MS. IOFFE: Two -- both his sons said.

MS. FARKAS: Both his sons, right.

MR. SCIUTTO: And Mueller reiterated today, timing interestingly, after the President's comments yesterday that business ties are going to be within the scope of the investigation.

MS. IOFFE: And it wouldn't be -- and it's not a crazy proposition either. He's doing real estate in New York and Florida. And guess where Russians who want to park their money outside of Russia, guess where they want to buy real estate, New York and Florida.

MR. PRICE: Agree. I think it's also a bit broader. And I think, you know, one framework to look at this President's foreign policy and some of the oddities of it is, you know, his embrace of people like Duterte and Erdoğan and Putin, you look at the countries where the rhetoric has been much softer than we might have expected and even an affinity with those leaders, and I think there is a very significant correlation with Trump investments.

So I think, you know, we sort of have to look at the -- look through the conflict of interest lens when it comes to foreign policy more broadly and not just Russia.

MR. SCIUTTO: And some of those you're saying hiding in plain sight, right. I mean, it's not on the --

MS. FARKAS: But the influence that the Russians have on him maybe greater because of these business ties and because he may owe them money. And then of course there's the issue of his campaign manager and all the work that he was doing and now whether he was indebted to Russians or not.

MR. SCIUTTO: It was interesting the \$17 million in debt and then there was a \$17 million payment that came from the Ukrainian tie business.

MS. IOFFE: Probably coincidence.

MR. SCIUTTO: But that's probably just an accident.

MS. IOFFE: Yeah.

MR. SCIUTTO: We could probably squeeze one more in if -- those two here.

MR. GERARD: Good afternoon panelists. Thanks for speaking with us. My name is Justin Gerard (phonetic). I'm a rising junior at the University of Notre Dame. And I'm curious, you spoke about the I.C. and maybe disclosing being more transparent about where their information is coming from. And I know that's kind of been an enduring problem after the election process was this distrust of the I.C.

But if they're unable to disclose a source as a means to enable future national security efforts, who in the government should be taking responsibility for going to bat for the I.C. if it's not going to be coming out of the executive branch?



MR. SCIUTTO: Ned, maybe you, you're a CIA alum.

MR. PRICE: Going to bat for the I.C. in terms of protecting it as an institution?

MR. GERARD: Yeah, the information that they are releasing.

MR. PRICE: I see.

MS. FARKAS: Is good. Vouching for it.

MR. GERARD: Vouching for the information that they're releasing with the American people. I'm from a small farm town in Indiana --

MS. FARKAS: I would say Congress, if I could.

MR. GERARD: -- and a lot of people, like, don't really -- they don't take it.

MR. SCIUTTO: Right.

MR. PRICE: You know I think there have been a couple instances where we have dealt with this. In the aftermath of the downing of MH17, there was a presentation derived from intelligence that demonstrated the assessment that this came from --

MS. FARKAS: Russian missile.

MR. PRICE: -- Russian missile, exactly, in a rebel area. And obviously in the aftermath of the 2014 chemical attack in the Damascus suburb and elsewhere. But it's always, you know, as someone who was in intelligent community, it goes against the instincts of an intelligence analyst or officer more broadly to see that information being presented publicly.

You know intelligence is collected for the benefit of policymakers and it's presented to -- it's collected to present policymakers with an array of options and opportunities that they can then act on. It's never comfortable as an intelligence officer to see that

information then made public.

Having moved to, you know, see this from the policy community, I certainly understand quite a bit more why it's necessary and I think it's actually indispensable when it comes to efforts like this. But I think the problem now, and to make this even more topical, is that we -- there has been an assault on the intelligence community from the executive branch itself. And so I think going forward we're going to have a problem where if there is another MH17 or if there is another instance of Russian meddling, the intelligence community, the presentation, will be crippled by the very statements that we've heard come from the President of the United States and his spokesperson.

So I think that is another institution in, you know, broader American society whose reputation has suffered needlessly and wrongly in my opinion. And it's one that I think will have to -- you know, will pay a price for that the next time there is an exposition of classified intelligence more broadly.

MR. SCIUTTO: All right. We are going to -- we're going to have to -- strict time limits here, so we're going to leave it there.

Let me please thank and ask you to thank Ned, Evelyn, and Julia.

(Applause)

MR. SCIUTTO: Thanks guys.

\* \* \* \* \*