

Top Senators Tell Trump: Do Not Meet Putin Alone

Jul 14 2018

WASHINGTON – Today, a group of top Senate Democrats wrote to President Trump, urging him in the strongest possible terms to avoid meeting alone with Russian President Vladimir Putin. In a letter to the White House, Vice Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Sen. Mark R. Warner (D-VA), Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Senate Foreign Relations Ranking Member Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Senate Judiciary Ranking Member Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Senate Armed Services Ranking Member Jack Reed (D-RI), Senate Appropriations Vice Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-VT), and Senate Banking Committee Ranking Member Sherrod Brown (D-OH) all encouraged the President to cancel the summit if he is not prepared to press Putin on Russia’s attack on the 2016 election and demand that Russian intelligence officials indicted by the U.S. Department of Justice be handed over to stand trial.

“If you insist on meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, Finland, on Monday, we write to urge that you include senior members of your team and not meet one-on-one with Mr. Putin, as reportedly planned. Mr. Putin is a trained KGB intelligence veteran who will come to this meeting well-prepared. As the Kremlin said last week, a one-on-one meeting with you ‘absolutely suits’ him. There must be other Americans in the room,” **the Senators wrote.**

The Senators also urged Trump to make Russia’s attack on the U.S. elections the top issue of the meeting, and pressed him to follow up on yesterday’s indictment of 12 Russians for hacking Democratic campaign officials and state elections boards.

“If you are not prepared to make Russia’s attack on our election the top issue you will discuss, then you should cancel the Helsinki summit. Mr. Putin is not a friend of the United States. The unanimous judgment of the professional men and women of the United States intelligence community is that Russia, at Mr. Putin’s direction, undertook a sophisticated campaign to interfere in the 2016 U.S. presidential election – a judgment that was just last week upheld in a bipartisan report by the Senate Intelligence Committee,” **said the Senators.** “Just yesterday, the Justice Department indicted 12 Russian military intelligence agents with hacking the computer networks of U.S. political organizations. These follow previous indictments

of 13 Russians associated with the St. Petersburg ‘troll factory.’ These individuals must be brought to the United States so that they can stand trial, and you should demand that Mr. Putin hand them over.”

Added the Senators, “We hope that you will use the opportunity of a meeting with Mr. Putin to advance a well-coordinated U.S. message, supported by senior leaders in your own administration, to hold Russia accountable for its unacceptable behavior. To do so, you must rely on the expertise and the experts of the State Department, Defense Department, CIA and other U.S. government agencies – not wing it on your own.”

The summit is part of a foreign trip planned by the White House which included visits to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) headquarters in Brussels and London. During this trip, President Trump [threatened](#) to pull out of the military alliance. Undermining the U.S.- NATO relationship has been a longtime goal of Putin.

“Our intelligence leaders unanimously assess that Mr. Putin will continue to try to interfere in upcoming U.S. elections. Russia continues its aggressive policy to undermine NATO, European solidarity, and Western institutions and norms. It continues to support a murderous regime in Syria, and to destabilize and occupy parts of Ukraine. Vladimir Putin wants to see the West divided and weakened. You must not play into his aims,” **the Senators counseled.**

The letter was sent a day after the U.S. Justice Department announced new charges against 12 Russian intelligence officers accused of hacking the Democratic National Committee, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, and the Clinton campaign. The indictments are part of Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election.

The full text of the letter can be found [here](#) and below:

July 14, 2018

President Donald J. Trump

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

If you insist on meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, Finland, on Monday, we write to urge that you include senior members of your team and not meet one-on-one with Mr. Putin, as reportedly planned. Mr. Putin is a trained KGB intelligence veteran who will come to this meeting well-prepared. As the Kremlin said last week, a one-on-one meeting with you “absolutely suits” him. There must be other Americans in the room.

If you are not prepared to make Russia’s attack on our election the top issue you will discuss, then you should cancel the Helsinki summit. Mr. Putin is not a friend of the United States. The unanimous judgment of the professional men and women of the United States intelligence community is that Russia, at Mr. Putin’s direction, undertook a sophisticated campaign to interfere in the 2016 U.S. presidential election – a judgment that was just last week upheld in a bipartisan report by the Senate Intelligence Committee. Just yesterday, the Justice Department indicted 12 Russian military intelligence agents with hacking the computer networks of U.S. political organizations. These follow previous indictments of 13 Russians associated with the St. Petersburg “troll factory.” These individuals must be brought to the United States so that they can stand trial, and you should demand that Mr. Putin hand them over.

Our intelligence leaders unanimously assess that Mr. Putin will continue to try to interfere in upcoming U.S. elections. Russia continues its aggressive policy to undermine NATO, European solidarity, and Western institutions and norms. It continues to support a murderous regime in Syria, and to destabilize and occupy parts of Ukraine. Vladimir Putin wants to see the West divided and weakened. You must not play into his aims.

We hope that you will use the opportunity of a meeting with Mr. Putin to advance a well-coordinated U.S. message, supported by senior leaders in your own administration, to hold Russia accountable for its unacceptable behavior. To do so, you must rely on the expertise and the experts of the State Department, Defense Department, CIA and other U.S. government agencies – not wing it on your own.

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