

The New York Times – 14.02.2017

Michael S. Schmidt, Mark Mazzetti and Matt Apuzzo

Trump Campaign Aides Had Repeated Contacts With Russian Intelligence

Люди з передвиборного штабу Трампа неодноразово контактували з російською розвідкою

Журнали дзвінків і прослухані телефонні розмови вказують на те, що члени передвиборного штабу Дональда Трампа під час президентської кампанії 2016 року і інші його соратники мали багаторазові телефонні розмови з високопоставленими чиновниками російської розвідки в рік, що передував виборам.

Американські правоохоронні органи і спецслужби прослуховували телефонні розмови приблизно в той же час, коли вони стали виявляти свідоцтва того, що Росія намагалася порушити хід президентських виборів, зламавши Національний комітет Демократичної партії. Спецслужби прагнули дізнатися, чи не перебуває штаб Трампа в змові з Росією з метою злону або інших дій, які можуть вплинути на вибори. З російської сторони в телефонних переговорах брали участь не тільки представники спецслужб, але і члени уряду. Дзвінки були прослухані «в рамках рутинного електронного стеження за переговорами іноземних чиновників, яке ведеться американською розвідкою і правоохоронними органами». Одним з радників Трампа, що фігурують в цих телефонних розмовах, був Пол Манафорт, який кілька місяців очолював передвиборний штаб Трампа в минулому році, а також працював як політичний консультант в Україні. Чиновники, які надали інформацію, відмовилися розкривати інші імена.

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/14/us/politics/russia-intelligence-communications-trump.html?_r=1

Phone records and intercepted calls show that members of Donald J. Trump's 2016 presidential campaign and other Trump associates had repeated contacts with senior Russian intelligence officials in the year before the election, according to four current and former American officials.

American law enforcement and intelligence agencies intercepted the communications around the same time they were discovering evidence that Russia was trying to disrupt the presidential election by hacking into the Democratic National Committee, three of the officials said. The intelligence agencies then sought to learn whether the Trump campaign was colluding with the Russians on the hacking or other efforts to influence the election.

The officials interviewed in recent weeks said that, so far, they had seen no evidence of such cooperation.

But the intercepts alarmed American intelligence and law enforcement agencies, in part because of the amount of contact that was occurring while Mr. Trump was speaking glowingly about the Russian president, Vladimir V. Putin. At one point last summer, Mr. Trump said at a campaign event that he hoped Russian intelligence services had stolen Hillary Clinton's emails and would make them public.

The officials said the intercepted communications were not limited to Trump campaign officials, and included other associates of Mr. Trump. On the Russian side, the contacts also included members of the government outside of the intelligence services, they said. All of the current and former officials spoke on the condition of anonymity because the continuing investigation is classified.

The officials said that one of the advisers picked up on the calls was Paul Manafort, who was Mr. Trump's campaign chairman for several months last year and had worked as a political consultant in Ukraine. The officials declined to identify the other Trump associates on the calls.

The call logs and intercepted communications are part of a larger trove of information that the F.B.I. is sifting through as it investigates the links between Mr. Trump's associates and the Russian government, as well as the hacking of the D.N.C., according to federal law enforcement officials. As part of its inquiry, the F.B.I. has obtained banking and travel records and conducted interviews, the officials said.

Mr. Manafort, who has not been charged with any crimes, dismissed the officials' accounts in a telephone interview on Tuesday. "This is absurd," he said. "I have no idea what this is referring to. I have never knowingly spoken to Russian intelligence officers, and I have never been involved with anything to do with the Russian government or the Putin administration or any other issues under investigation today."

He added, "It's not like these people wear badges that say, 'I'm a Russian intelligence officer.'"

Several of Mr. Trump's associates, like Mr. Manafort, have done business in Russia. And it is not unusual for American businessmen to come in contact with foreign intelligence officials, sometimes unwittingly, in countries like Russia and Ukraine, where the spy services are deeply embedded in society. Law enforcement officials did not say to what extent the contacts might have been about business.

The officials would not disclose many details, including what was discussed on the calls, the identity of the Russian intelligence officials who participated, and how many of Mr. Trump's advisers were talking to the Russians. It is also unclear whether the conversations had anything to do with Mr. Trump himself.

A report from American intelligence agencies that was made public in January concluded that the Russian government had intervened in the election in part to help Mr. Trump, but did not address whether any members of the Trump campaign had participated in the effort.

The intercepted calls are different from the wiretapped conversations last year between Michael T. Flynn, Mr. Trump's former national security adviser, and Sergey I. Kislyak, Russia's ambassador to the United States. In those calls, which led to Mr. Flynn's resignation on Monday night, the two men discussed sanctions that the Obama administration imposed on Russia in December.

But the cases are part of American intelligence and law enforcement agencies' routine electronic surveillance of the communications of foreign officials.