

## Trump's Latest Bizarre Tweet About Russia Just Left Him Badly Exposed

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By Greg Sargent

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### THE MORNING PLUM:

In recent days, President Trump has adopted a fiendishly clever new line on the ongoing Russia probes: He will fully acknowledge that Russia did try to sabotage our election, but only in the context of blaming former president Barack Obama for it. This morning, Trump took this argument to a new level, testing an argument about Russian meddling that I had not heard before:



**Donald J. Trump**

The reason that President Obama did NOTHING about Russia after being notified by the CIA of meddling is that he expected Clinton would win..

[5:37 AM - 26 Jun 2017](#)



**Donald J. Trump**

...and did not want to "rock the boat." He didn't "choke," he colluded or obstructed, and it did the Dems and Crooked Hillary no good.

[5:50 AM - 26 Jun 2017](#)

This is, in a sense, new. In a [few tweets](#) last week, Trump blasted the Obama administration for failing to act on what it had learned about Russia's meddling efforts. But now Trump is explicitly offering a rationale for this, *i.e.*, that Obama didn't think Trump was going to win, and so didn't bother doing anything about it, because it might have "rocked the boat," whatever that is supposed to mean.

This line of argument leaves Trump deeply exposed, however. It represents an acknowledgment that the intelligence community had, in fact, concluded that Russia interfered *with the purpose of*

*helping Trump win.* And it also exposes Trump to questions about what his administration (and Republicans) are prepared to do about expected Russian efforts to meddle in the next election.

The news of the Obama administration's failure to act in response to Russian meddling was [documented in an extensive Post investigation last week](#). The White House had been informed as early as last August that intelligence confirmed that an extensive cyber-campaign was underway to disrupt the presidential race and undermine public faith in our democracy, with the goal of helping Trump win. The Obama administration debated various responses but went through with punitive action only after the election was over, and senior officials and Democrats, rightly, are now sharply critical of the paralysis and inaction. As one former official put it: "I feel like we sort of choked."

*[[Despite strenuous effort, 'Fox & Friends' fails to hit new low](#)]*

Due either to his megalomania or his dishonesty, or some combination of the two, Trump has regularly conflated two questions: First, the question of what Russia did to undermine our election; and second, whether the Trump campaign colluded with those efforts. Trump has regularly dismissed the latter question, of course, but this has had the effect of leading him to be unwilling to seriously grapple with the former one, as if fully acknowledging the extent of Russian meddling would be tantamount to acknowledging an attack *on him* (hence the megalomania-or-dishonesty question). Indeed, Trump said the claims of Russian meddling are a "big Dem HOAX" as early as [last week](#).

But now Trump is fully acknowledging that this meddling did happen (provided he can blame Obama for it). More to the point, though, his tweets this morning admit that our intelligence community not only did conclude this but also that Russia did this to help him win the election. Why would Obama's inaction in the face of Russian sabotage be grounded in the belief (as Trump claims) that Hillary Clinton was going to win anyway, unless our intelligence officials had concluded that this sabotage was designed to benefit him against her? (That is what officials did conclude, per the [report they put out in January](#).)

This criticism of Obama's inaction, while certainly justifiable on the merits, opens the White House up to questions as to what he, Trump, is prepared to do about Russian sabotage *next time*. The intel community's [January report](#) flatly concluded that Russia is already developing "future

influence efforts” against the United States and noted that the sabotage of our election has become a “new normal.” Former FBI director James B. Comey went even further in [his recent testimony to Congress, claiming](#) that Russia *currently* constitutes “the greatest threat of any nation on Earth” to our democratic process.

And yet, in an important segment, [NBC News recently reported](#) that the Trump administration has taken “little meaningful action to prevent Russian hacking, leaking and disruption in the next national election in 2018.” NBC News reported on “an urgent warning from government officials and outside experts” that is being telegraphed to the White House that “the U.S. may not be ready to stop Russia” from “interfering in our next election.” Experts quoted by NBC News said the United States needs to better coordinate with tech companies to blunt three expected Russian attacks, which reprise efforts that were made last time: the spreading of fake news; the hacking of embarrassing information about candidates; and attempted cyberattacks on election databases. Yet NBC News reports: “Dozens of state officials told NBC News they have received little direction from Washington about election security.”

[\[How Democratic timidity may have helped Trump get elected\]](#)

The White House insisted to NBC News that it is taking steps to prepare for upcoming Russian sabotage efforts. But Trump himself has shown little interest in Russian meddling. As Comey [testified to Congress](#), he could not recall a single instance of Trump asking him how the United States might better prepare for a future Russian attack. If Trump is now going to bash the Obama administration — again, justifiably on the merits — for inaction against Russian meddling, you’d think media scrutiny of the Trump administration’s own response to the next Russian sabotage effort, which our own intelligence community has warned is going to happen, will now intensify in a big way.

#### **\* REPUBLICANS UNSURE IF HEALTH-CARE BILL CAN PASS THIS**

**WEEK:** Politico [reports that Republicans are increasingly uncertain that they can get 50 votes to pass the health bill through the Senate this week](#), before the July 4 recess.

If McConnell cannot muster 50 votes to take up his Obamacare repeal bill this week, it remains unclear whether he would return to the effort after July 4 or move on to other top GOP priorities, including tax cuts and raising the federal debt limit.

One imagines that the blowback Republicans receive while at home might make them less inclined to plunge back into this debate once they return.

The Senate bill cuts Medicaid spending by more than \$800 billion — it [phases out](#) the federal matching money for expansion enrollees, and it institutes a system of per capita caps that will force states to come up with more money or throw people off. The Congressional Budget Office will soon tell us how many fewer millions would be covered under the GOP's *non*-cuts.

**\* GOP SENATOR TELLS TRUTH ABOUT MEDICAID CUTS:** Also on ABC's "This Week," Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), unlike the Republicans above, [was honest about what the Senate bill actually does](#):

"I'm very concerned about ... the impact of the Medicaid cuts on our state governments, the most vulnerable people in our society, and health care providers such as our rural hospitals and nursing home, most of whom are very dependent on the Medicaid program ... given the inflation rate that would be applied in the outer years to the Medicaid program, the Senate bill is going to have more impact on the Medicaid program than even the House bill."

Exactly. The Senate bill's funding formula is more stringent than the House bill's, and its cuts would directly impact hospitals, nursing homes and state governments' ability to care for their most vulnerable.

**\* REPUBLICANS WILL ADD PENALTIES TO BILL:** Vox [reports that Senate GOP leaders are expected to add penalties to their bill that would lock out of the market](#) people who fail to have six months of continuous coverage:

The six-month waiting period could ... complicate the Senate Republicans' repeal efforts, because it may run afoul of the chamber's [complex reconciliation rules](#). Republicans are using what's called "budget reconciliation" to pass their health care bill with a bare majority of 50

votes and avoid a Democratic filibuster. But the rules governing reconciliation restrict what policies the GOP can include in their bill — the waiting period is one of the provisions thought to be in doubt.

Of course, the penalties are a concession to the need for something like the mandate, which Republicans described as an existential threat to American liberty for years.

**\* TRUMP CONFIRMS HE CALLED BILL ‘MEAN’:** On “Fox and Friends,” Trump was asked about Barack Obama’s claim that the health bill was “mean.” [Trump replied:](#)

“Well he actually used my term, ‘mean.’ That was my term. Because I want to see — and I speak from the heart — that’s what I want to see, I want to see a bill with heart.”

The Senate bill is in some ways more heartless than the House bill is, but Trump will of course sign it immediately if both chambers pass it, because he doesn’t care in the least what’s actually in it.

**\* HOW WAVERING REPUBLICANS MIGHT END UP BACKING THE BILL:** E.J.

Dionne Jr. [predicts that wavering GOP moderates might decide in the end that the GOP bill](#) was the “best they could do” in terms of Obamacare repeal. However:

But only by killing this bill would these senators open the way for reasonable fixes to the [Affordable Care Act]. Do they really want to say someday that one of their most important votes in the Senate involved taking health care away from millions of Americans? I would like to believe they are too decent for that. I hope I’m not lying to myself.

It’s simply true that bipartisan improvements to the ACA are actually possible and that they would be more in line with the outcomes these moderates actually want. But good luck getting them to admit it.

**\* ADMINISTRATION IS SPLIT OVER RUSSIA:** The Associated Press [reports that Trump wants to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin](#) with “full diplomatic bells and whistles.”

But:

The idea is exposing deep divisions within the administration on the best way to approach Moscow in the midst of an ongoing investigation into Russian meddling in the U.S. elections. Many administration officials believe the U.S. needs to maintain its distance from Russia at such a sensitive time — and interact only with great caution. But Trump and some others within his administration have been pressing for a full bilateral meeting.

It's also worth recalling that the intelligence community says Russia will try to sabotage our next election, too, which also doesn't seem to be weighing too heavily on Trump.

Source: [Washingtonpost.com](https://www.washingtonpost.com)