

Obama's Pentagon Is a Swamp in Need of Draining

Yesterday, the headline in *Foreign Policy*, a leading establishment publication covering the Department of State, the Pentagon and national security affairs blared, "Russia Missing from Trump's Top Defense Priorities, According to DoD Memo." The article's sub-headline read: "Meanwhile, Pentagon brass say Moscow is the No. 1 threat to the United States."

Other lefty establishment media, such as The Huffington Post, immediately piled on with "Leaked Pentagon memo indicates that Russia is not a top defense priority for Trump."

Foreign Policy, which obtained the document and posted it online here, states that the Dec. 1 letter "was written by acting Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Brian McKeon to employees in his office."

The image of the memo shows that McKeon listed four of Trump's top defense priorities as had been outlined to him by our longtime acquaintance Mira Ricardel, a former senior Republican Senate national security staffer and now a member of the president-elect's transition team.

Obama appointee McKeon describes his take on Trump's priorities as follows: "1. Develop a strategy to defeat/destroy ISIS. 2. Build a strong defense ... 3. Develop a comprehensive USG cyber strategy. 4. Find greater efficiencies ..."

An Obama Pentagon spokesman declined to comment on the incoming Trump administration's priorities, but said the Trump transition team had been briefed on issues related to Russia.

"We would leave it up to them to describe their priorities," Gordon Trowbridge, the deputy Pentagon press secretary told *Foreign Policy*. "We have provided them with multiple briefings that touched on Russia policy. That's the extent of our knowledge on their priorities."

As you can see from reading the memo, besides placing an emphasis on budgetary issues, "force strength" and counterterrorism in Iraq and Syria, the memo noted other briefings between the Defense Department and the Trump transition team on China and North Korea.

But according to McKeon's report on his conversation with one person on the Trump transition team, Russia was not mentioned.

According to *Foreign Policy*'s reporting, a Trump transition official declined to say where Russia fits into the president-elect's defense priorities but said the memo is "not comprehensive."

"For the media to speculate that this list of issues represents all of the president-elect's priorities is completely erroneous and misleading," said Jessica Ditto, a transition spokeswoman.

For the record, we will now put all of this in perspective.

An Obama appointee meets with a member of Trump's transition team and memorializes the alleged conversation in a memo that goes straight to the establishment media.

The media outlet that obtains the exclusive on the memo is *Foreign Policy*, considered by many to be the house organ of the D.C. national security establishment that opposed Trump during the campaign. *Foreign Policy* is also particularly notable for its long-held neoconservative editorial consensus.

In response to questions about the leaked (or should we say planted?) memo, another Obama appointee takes the opportunity to claim that Trump's people have been briefed on the Russian threat and to imply that Trump is in the tank for Russia for ignoring the warnings about Russia from the Obama administration.

Let's be clear: Russia is not necessarily our friend, but this whole thing smells like week-old borscht.

Taken at face value, what the memo says is that Trump plans to fulfill his campaign promises of ending Pentagon waste, rebuilding our depleted military, building and deploying an effective cyberwarfare capability and defeating ISIS and militant Islam.

And if not the Russians and the Red Chinese, whom would an effective cyberwarfare capability and a rebuilt military be aimed at deterring?

What's more, the people who are attacking Trump for allegedly being too friendly with Vladimir Putin's Russia are the same people who bungled the "reset" with Russia when Hillary Clinton became Secretary of State—they couldn't even get "reset" right in idiomatic Russian.

The failure to enforce Obama's "red line" in Syria, the inept intervention in Ukraine's politics, a policy of neglect in the Balkans and other Obama demonstrations of weakness around the world created a power vacuum the Russians were only too happy to fill.

And let's not forget Obama's hot mike reveal in South Korea when he was caught on camera assuring outgoing Russian President Dmitry Medvedev that he would have "more flexibility" to deal with contentious issues like missile defense after the U.S. presidential election.

Back then, Obama urged Moscow to give him "space" until after

the November 2012 ballot, and Medvedev said he would relay the message to incoming Russian president Vladimir Putin.

Obama and Medvedev were unaware their words were being picked up by microphones as reporters were led into the room.

As he was leaning toward Medvedev in Seoul, Obama was overheard asking for time—"particularly with missile defense"—until he is in a better position politically to resolve such issues.

"This is my last election ... After my election, I have more flexibility," Obama said, expressing confidence that he would win a second term, reported Reuters.

And to the surprise of no one who was watching and taking Obama at his word, U.S. missile defense deployment plans have been stalled, with no concessions from Moscow.

The Pentagon, with its hundreds of billions in waste, its massive tail-to-tooth problem, its revolving door between government and defense contractors, its penetration by Muslim agents of influence and its institutional investment in the neoconservative worldview is one of Washington's deepest swamps.

The neoconservative counter to Trump's "Make America Great Again" seems to be shaping up to be "Make Russia Evil Again."

If President-elect Trump wants to drain the swamp in D.C. and formulate a new national security policy focused on winning cyberwarfare battles and eradicating ISIS and militant Islam, he should start by draining Obama's Pentagon. {eo}

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