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Election Interference: Majority Investigation Amplifies Russian Attack on 2020 Election

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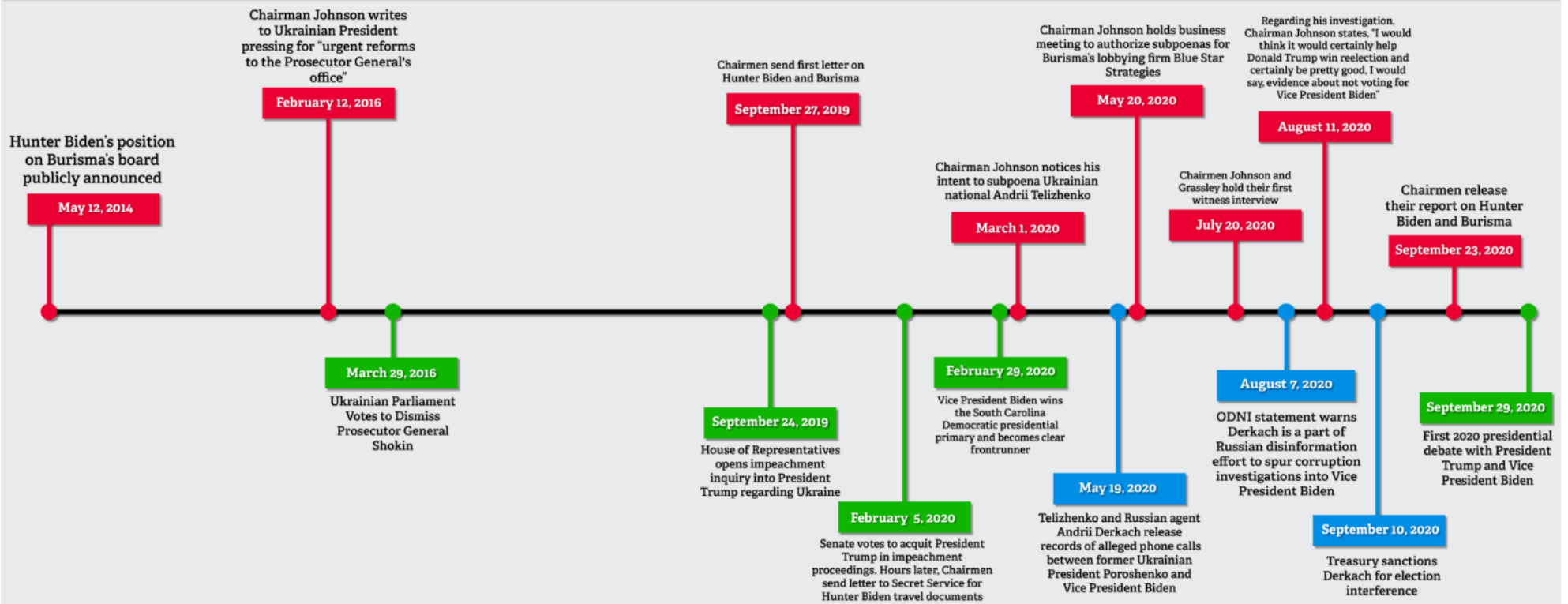
Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs

U.S. Senator Gary Peters | Ranking Member

Election Interference: Majority Investigation Amplifies Russian Attack on 2020 Election.

A HSGAC and Senate Finance Committee Minority Staff Report

Timeline of Chairmen Johnson & Grassley's Investigation



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Majority staff report released by Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and Senate Finance Committee Chairmen Ron Johnson and Charles Grassley amplifies discredited allegations that are part of a known Russian campaign to interfere in the 2020 election.

Existence of this campaign has been confirmed by Trump Administration officials. In August 2020, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence publicly warned that Russia is engaged in efforts, including through the use of pro-Russia Ukrainians – particularly known Russian agent Andrii Derkach – to spread claims about corruption to spur investigations into Vice President Biden. In September 2020, the Department of the Treasury sanctioned Mr. Derkach for his role in the Kremlin-directed efforts to promote the same false claims that the Majority report has alleged. The Majority’s investigation is one outcome of Mr. Derkach’s election interference efforts.

Chairman Johnson repeatedly impugned Vice President Biden in public on the basis of secret evidence he claimed to have obtained. Contrary to his public insinuations, the Chairmen’s investigation found no evidence that the former Vice President did anything wrong in his efforts to carry out official U.S. foreign policy in Ukraine. This premise was advanced by the Chairmen with the explicit intention of tarnishing Vice President Biden’s reputation and his candidacy for President of the United States, even though it required the Chairmen to discount the testimony of Trump appointees and career Foreign Service officers in favor of Russian-backed conspiracy theories.

Every witness interviewed for this investigation testified that Vice President Biden did not alter United States foreign policy to benefit his son Hunter Biden, and that Hunter Biden’s presence on the board of the Ukrainian gas company Burisma had no effect on U.S. foreign policy. Every witness stated that Hunter Biden and his associates had no role in the formulation of U.S. policy, that Hunter Biden’s role did not influence U.S. foreign policy decisions, and that Vice President Biden carried out U.S. foreign policy in the interest of the United States. The investigation’s evidence, set forth in this Minority report, confirms there was no corruption, wrongdoing, or impropriety on the part of Vice President Biden.

The U.S. policy to condition a loan guarantee in part on the removal of Ukraine’s Prosecutor General Viktor Shokin was an anticorruption measure that received strong, bipartisan support at the time, including from Chairman Johnson. Chairmen Johnson and Grassley did not raise any concerns related to Hunter Biden’s position on the board of Burisma until Vice President Biden became a top tier presidential candidate. Once Vice President Biden became the presumptive Democratic nominee, the Majority escalated their politically motivated investigation in an effort to damage his prospects as a challenger to President Trump in the 2020 presidential election.

The Chairmen relied on suspect sources – including known purveyors of Russian disinformation narratives – as the basis for their initial inquiries: primarily Ukrainian national Andrii Telizhenko and discredited American journalist John Solomon. Mr. Telizhenko – who is cited 42 times in the Chairmen’s letters – has extensive ties to Mr. Derkach. Mr. Telizhenko and Mr. Derkach

each released leaks of alleged phone calls between former Vice President Biden and former Ukrainian President Poroshenko on May 19, 2020, apparently timed to influence a Committee vote the next day. On May 20, Chairman Johnson convened a Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee vote to authorize subpoenas related to Mr. Telizhenko. Mr. Telizhenko aided Mr. Derkach's claims by translating them from Russian to make his disinformation accessible to an American audience.

The Chairmen have uncovered absolutely no evidence of wrongdoing by Vice President Biden. Instead, this effort has been a partisan and unnecessary distraction from important business before both Committees as the country faces a once in a century pandemic. Since this investigation began, 200,000 Americans have perished due to COVID-19. The Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee has jurisdiction over pandemic preparedness and response. And yet, this Committee has now spent more than twice as much time on the record in this investigation than it has devoted to all of its COVID hearings, combined. At a time when the Committees should be focusing on the health, safety and economic well-being of Americans, the continued pursuit of this partisan investigation is a gross misuse of Committee time and resources.

Key Findings:

At the request of Ranking Members Peters and Wyden, this report sets forth for the public excerpts of over 36,000 pages of documents and all 10 interviews conducted by Committee staff. This report makes the following key findings:

The Chairmen's Investigation Is the Outcome of a Russian Disinformation Campaign:

The Russian government has encouraged a disinformation campaign against former Vice President Biden. This campaign was already underway in 2015 in response to his anti-corruption efforts in Ukraine, and it gained renewed fervor because of his candidacy in the 2020 presidential election. The Chairmen's investigation is the result of Russian attempts to influence the 2020 presidential election and benefit President Trump's reelection by denigrating Vice President Biden and manipulating U.S. political institutions to aid in efforts to weaken U.S. democracy and national security.

No Evidence of Wrongdoing by Vice President Biden:

The Chairmen's investigation, which includes more than 50 hours of transcribed interviews of 10 witnesses and the review of thousands of pages of documents from federal agencies, does not support the premise that Hunter Biden's position on the board of Burisma created a conflict of interest that impacted United States foreign policy. Instead, the investigation has uncovered ample evidence to the contrary, which shows that Hunter Biden's position on the board of Burisma had no effect whatsoever on United States foreign policy.

The Chairmen's Claims Mirror Claims of U.S.-Sanctioned Kremlin Agent – Andrii Derkach and Associate Andrii Telizhenko:

The U.S. Treasury Department recently sanctioned "active Russian agent" Andrii Derkach, thereby exposing Russian-directed "malign influence campaigns and protecting

our upcoming elections from foreign interference.” The principal sources cited by the Chairmen, including Ukrainian national Andrii Telizhenko, have extensively promoted Derkach’s claims and are closely tied to Derkach collaborator and President Trump’s personal attorney Rudy Giuliani.

Chairman Johnson Repeatedly Stated the Investigation’s Purpose to Influence the 2020 Presidential Election:

Chairman Johnson continues to explicitly, publicly state the purpose of this investigation is to “help Donald Trump win reelection” and provide “evidence about not voting for Vice President Biden.” The Office of the Director of National Intelligence recently assessed Russia’s election interference goals as one and the same – “to undermine former Vice President Biden’s candidacy” and “to boost President Trump’s candidacy.”

No Evidence U.S.-Ukraine Policy Altered to Assist Hunter Biden:

State Department communications and detailed, lengthy interviews with former and current officials clearly demonstrate that U.S. policy during the Obama Administration was not influenced in any manner to assist Burisma or Hunter Biden. Vice President Biden did not alter U.S. policies toward Ukraine in any way to benefit Burisma or his son. The evidence unanimously shows that the normal interagency policy process was driven solely by the national interest.

No Evidence Vice President Biden Tried to Halt a Corruption Investigation:

Vice President Joe Biden’s public condemnation of Ukraine’s Prosecutor General Viktor Shokin was a U.S. foreign policy priority and was not, as the Majority alleges, an attempt to halt a corruption investigation into Burisma. State Department officials interviewed in this investigation explained that Shokin did not pursue corruption investigations against Burisma’s owner, effectively shielding the owner from prosecution, and that removing Shokin made an investigation into Burisma more, not less, likely. The Senate Ukraine Caucus, including Chairman Johnson himself, supported the United States policy advocating for the removal of Prosecutor General Shokin.

No Evidence Any Official U.S. Government Action Favored Burisma:

There is no evidence that any action of the U.S. government or any U.S. official was taken to benefit Burisma or Hunter Biden. On the contrary, emails obtained by the Committees indicate persistent, negative views among key officials and numerous complaints against the outreach of Burisma’s consulting firm Blue Star Strategies.