

# Bill Kaplan: Impeachment unlikely, for now

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Arizona GOP Senator John McCain said: that the goings-on and scandals at the White House had reached “Watergate size and scale”. A short review.

In January the CIA and other U.S. intelligence agencies reported the following: “We assess Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the U.S. presidential election; Russia’s goals were to undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process; We also assess Putin ... aspired to help ... Trump’s election chances when possible by discrediting ... Clinton and publicly contrasting her unfavorably to him; (and) We assess with high confidence that Russian military intelligence ... relayed material (from cyber operations) to WikiLeaks.” There’s more.

In March FBI Director James Comey testified before the House Intelligence Committee. He confirmed that the FBI “is investigating the nature of any links between individuals associated with the Trump (presidential) campaign and the Russian government and whether there was any coordination between the campaign and Russia’s efforts” (to interfere in the 2016 presidential election). Since then one bombshell after another.

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First, Trump’s shocking firing of Comey, with Trump, Vice President Pence, White House press staff and others misrepresenting the reasons for dismissing Comey. Finally, Trump told NBC News: “You know, this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made-up story ... .” Motive. More stunning revelations.

The New York Times (NYT) reported that Trump pressured Comey to “let this go”, i.e., the FBI investigation into fired National Security Adviser Michael Flynn (who had lied about discussing U.S. sanctions against Russia with the Russian ambassador to the U.S.). Trump’s admonition was made the day after Flynn was fired. Moreover, earlier in January Trump had improperly and repeatedly asked Comey for a pledge of loyalty. That took place the day after the White House learned Flynn was interviewed by the FBI about his contacts with the Russian ambassador to the U.S. Explosive.

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein reacted appropriately by appointing well-respected former FBI Director Robert Mueller to be a special counsel to lead the Russian probe. Another expose. The NYT reported Trump told the Russian ambassador (to the U.S.) and foreign minister that firing Comey had solved a problem. Trump said: “I faced great pressure because of Russia. That’s taken off.” Obstruction of justice.

All the while House Speaker Paul Ryan has pretended that nothing was going on. He reduced himself to a servile enabler of Trump’s misdeeds. Contrast with Wisconsin GOP Representative Mike Gallagher, who reacted strongly to Comey’s firing and press reports that Trump had discussed classified intelligence with the above Russian officials. What to do?

Impeachment is unlikely, for now. Why? It’s a math problem with a GOP-led Congress. Moreover, Special Counsel Mueller and congressional investigations have a long way to go to get to the bottom. Magical thinking is foolish. Focus on winning the 2018 elections with a Democratic message of economic security and social justice. Restore checks and balances. Vote.

— *Kaplan wrote a guest column from Washington, D.C. for the Wisconsin State Journal from 1995 - 2009.*