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Situation Report, presented by Russia Direct: Is Moscow Trying to Influence U.S. Election?; Serious Questions Over DNC Hack; Turkey Releases Coup Doc; China Mad Over THAAD; Tough Days for Germany; And Lots More

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SITUATION REPORT

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By Paul McLeary with Adam Rawnsley and Elias Groll

Moscow calling. Did Russian hackers, supported by the Kremlin, just force the resignation of a major American political figure? That's what some analysts have come to believe in the wake of the **leak** of a huge trove of emails from the Democratic National Committee's servers.

On Friday, the emails and internal documents **spilled** onto the internet courtesy of WikiLeaks, quickly **claiming** the scalp of DNC boss Debbie Wasserman Schultz and kicking off a scandal over how the party had worked with the campaign of Hillary Clinton to undermine the candidacy of Sen. Bernie Sanders.

Larger implications. Last month, the DNC and security firm CrowdStrike **reported** that hackers likely working on behalf of two Russian intelligence agencies had **broken into** DNC servers and made off with opposition research and email messages. After that report, a hacker **calling** himself Guccifer 2.0 stepped forward and took responsibility for the hack, saying he had nothing to do with Moscow's intelligence services. But Guccifer is most likely a fiction created by the GRU, Russian military intelligence, and the FSB, the successor group to the KGB, to mask their role in the hack — and the subsequent attempt to influence the U.S. election.

The hackers. One group, FANCY BEAR or APT 28, obtained access in April, while the other, COZY BEAR, or APT 29, **first entered** the network in the summer of 2015. A good place to start to get a handle on all this is the **New York Times' Adrian Chen's** June 2015 **in-depth look** at Russian troll and hacker factories.

Politics. The Clinton campaign has taken the opportunity **to tie** the Trump campaign as closely as possible to the Kremlin, with Clinton's campaign chief, Robby Mook, **telling ABC News** Sunday that "it's troubling that some experts are now telling us that this was done by the Russians for the purpose of helping Donald Trump." The Trump campaign rejected such accusations.

Russian connections. Last week, **FP's Dan De Luce** and **Paul McLeary wrote** that Trump has surrounded himself with advisors who have had direct business ties to Moscow, including campaign manager, Paul Manafort, a onetime consultant to the pro-Moscow former president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich. One of his military advisors, retired Lt. Gen. Mike Flynn, was **invited** to sit at Putin's table at a December dinner in Moscow sponsored by RT, the government-funded news network, and Carter Page, a former consultant to Russia's state-owned gas giant, Gazprom, has suggested Washington is to blame for raising tensions with Moscow over Ukraine. Trump's surrogates also successfully **watered down** language in the GOP platform to remove calls for arming Ukraine's forces against pro-Russian separatists.

VP pick. The news threatens to drown out Hillary Clinton's announcement of her pick of Tim Kaine as her vice presidential nominee. **FP's Molly O'Toole writes** that picking Kaine "may do little to placate the progressive Democrats who flocked to Sanders, some of whom have pledged to **protest** Clinton during the Democratic Party's upcoming convention. And the leaked DNC emails will fuel their suspicions that their candidate was treated unfairly." But Kaine hit Trump over the weekend, criticizing him for being harshly critical his political opponents. "He doesn't trash talk everybody," Kaine said, "he likes Vladimir Putin."

Here come the briefings. Later this week, once the Democratic National Convention wraps up, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump will **begin receiving** classified briefings from U.S. intel agencies. Republican and Democratic presidential and vice presidential nominees have been given the briefings since 1952, after their parties' national conventions wrap up. As one former intelligence official **told ABC News**, "most of the information is what I'd call analytical, sophisticated, carefully thought-out thoughts about where things are going, where trend lines are, things to watch. It's more of a description of the landscape and where the landmines are and where the active volcanoes are rather than getting into the capabilities."

Bright lights. The Turkish government has released a highly-produced coup documentary, in response to what it says is biased western media coverage of the failed military coup earlier this month. **FP's John Hudson reports** that the Turkish Embassy in Washington "made its case to reporters Friday that Ankara has not abused its authority in the wake of a failed coup, screening a slick, government-produced documentary that shows tanks running over protesters and fighter jets strafing a city. Much of the film appeared to be taken from security cameras perched on buildings or from international TV news clips, including footage of a soldier shooting a civilian at point-blank range."

Bellingcat has translated some of the WhatsApp messages from the coup plotters **here**.

Hey there! Good morning and as always, if you have any thoughts, announcements, tips, or national security-related events to share, please pass them along to SitRep HQ. Best way is to send them to: paul.mcleary@foreignpolicy.com or on Twitter: [@paulmcleary](https://twitter.com/paulmcleary) or [@arawnsley](https://twitter.com/arawnsley)

Germany

Germany had a rough, tragic weekend as two attackers carried out unrelated attacks in the state of Bavaria.

In Munich, an 18 year -old German-Iranian man, David Sonboly, went on a **shooting rampage** with a pistol, killing nine people before turning the gun on himself. Little is known about Sonboly's motives but officials have so far said he struggled with mental health issues and appeared to have no political agenda. He purchased the gun used in the attack, a deactivated Glock fixed to fire bullets again, from an online darknet market. Some local media reports suggest Sonboly may have used the cryptocurrency **bitcoin** to

purchase the weapon.

On Sunday, the **Guardian** reports that a bomb made by a Syrian asylum seeker **exploded** as the man carried it near a music festival in Ansbach, Germany, killing him and injuring a dozen others. It's unknown whether the device went off prematurely or whether the explosion was the result of an intentional suicide bombing, but authorities so far suspect the latter. The unnamed bomber had been denied asylum but allowed to stay in Germany and had previously tried to commit suicide.

China

China would like you to know that it's **still grumpy** over the U.S. decision to deploy a terminal high altitude air defense (THAAD) battery to South Korea. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met his South Korean counterpart Yun Byung-se this week for talks and took the opportunity to register Beijing's displeasure with the THAAD deployment once again, saying it has "harmed the foundation of mutual trust" between China and South Korea. The U.S. and South Korea say the air defense system will be used to defend against North Korea's growing ballistic missile program but Chinese officials have said that the THAAD system's radar could peer into Chinese territory.

Syria

Syria's struggling healthcare providers have been **targeted yet again** as airstrikes from Assad regime planes hit four hospitals and a blood bank in Aleppo this weekend. **Al Jazeera** spoke with the city's Independent Doctors Association, who said the air assault had killed a newborn baby. The strikes failed to completely destroy the hospitals and only one has ceased operations for the moment. The strikes come as Syrian President Bashar al-Assad says he's ready for another round of peace talks with the opposition.

al Qaeda

Presumably feeling left out of the Islamic State-inspired carnage of recent weeks, al Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri released an audio interview **telling** fighters to take Western hostages and exchange them for jailed jihadists. A translation of the recording **Reuters** received from the SITE Intelligence Group shows Zawahiri urging followers to kidnap western hostages "until they liberate the last Muslim male prisoner and last Muslim female prisoner."

Afghanistan

The war in Afghanistan has caused a record number of **civilian casualties** in just the first half of 2016, **Stars and Stripes** reports. The U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) keeps statistics on civilian casualties in the conflicts, and finds that compared to the same period last year, injuries are up six percent and deaths are a single percentage point higher for a combined total of 5,166 casualties so far -- four percent greater than last year. UNAMA lays most of the blame for the at the feet of insurgent groups, writing that they're responsible for around 60 percent of those civilians harmed in its statistics.

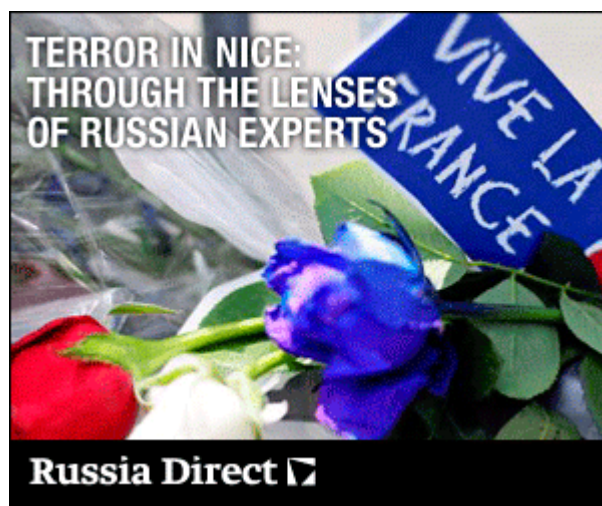
Silicon Valley

A Brazilian judge says authorities busted up an Islamist terrorist cell with the help of Facebook and Twitter, foiling a plot **aimed at the Olympics** about to take place in Rio de Janeiro. An investigation dubbed Operation Hashtag has thus far netted a dozen suspects whom Brazilian federal police accuse of being Islamic State fanboys plotting attacks against the Olympic games. Judge Marcos Josegredi da Silva told a local news program that Facebook and Twitter cooperated with the investigation, handing over data about suspects' conversations.

Air Force

The U.S. Air Force says it's weighing two options for a **close air support aircraft** to replace the much-beloved A-10 warthog. *FlightGlobal* reports that Lexington Institute analyst Dan Goure shared details of a recent Air Force briefing on an interim A-10 replacement, dubbed the A-X2, as well as an Observation/Attack-X or OA-X light attack aircraft. For the OA-X program, the service is considering the Beechcraft AT-6 and the Embraer A-29 Super Tucano, hoping to get one of the two aircraft into service within a year. Air Force officials are reportedly looking to get the A-X2 replacement for the A-10 up within five years, but Congressional defenders of the Hog worry that they won't be able to keep pace with the service's phased retirement of the A-10.

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