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# State Dept. Official Urges 'Strong' U.S. Response to Election Hacking By Russia

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BY **JOHN HUDSON**

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A State Department official called for a “strong” U.S. response to Russian hacking of Democratic Party organizations on Thursday and urged the administration to name names and clearly convey that manipulating U.S. elections won’t go unpunished.

“There needs to be a thoughtful, principled, strong response,” said Kathleen Kavalec, the State Department’s deputy assistant secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, speaking at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. She said the U.S. response must send a “clear message” and “assign responsibility,” in addition to making clear that “we won’t tolerate future intrusions.”

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Until last week, the Obama administration had avoided directly accusing the Russian government of a wave of cyber attacks against the Democratic National Committee and Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee ahead of the Nov. 8 presidential election.

But on October 7, the Director of National Intelligence and the head of the Department of Homeland Security said Russia's hacking and disclosure of Democratic party information was "intended to interfere with the U.S. election process."

"We believe, based on the scope and sensitivity of these efforts, that only Russia's senior-most officials could have authorized these activities," read the U.S. statement.

Outside analysts have outlined a range of possible U.S. cyber responses while maintaining that it should be proportional — that is, not destroying the Russian electricity grid. On Wednesday, Jim Stavridis, the former NATO supreme allied commander and an FP contributor, **called** for the U.S. to expose the names of high-level officials who had a role in the attacks, similarly to Kavalec's suggestion.

Stavridis also said the U.S. should consider undermining Moscow's "reliance on a wide variety of cyber-tools to censor the web within its own country by exposing them to the public." Beyond that, he floated the idea of using U.S. cyber capabilities to "expose the overseas banking accounts and financial resources of high-level Russian government officials," including Vladimir Putin.

The Kremlin has called the U.S. allegations about hacking "nonsense," and on Saturday, the Russian Foreign Ministry accused the United States of fanning "unprecedented anti-Russian hysteria."

The hacks have raised concerns about the integrity of the U.S. voting process, but U.S. intelligence officials said there is no evidence that Moscow has manipulated America's voting recording systems.

Still, former U.S. officials have said a strong punitive response to Moscow now is important as it could serve as a deterrent against future Russian meddling both in the United States and in Europe.

“It’s important to recognize that just like in the U.S. electoral process, Russia will be looking at European elections that are just over the horizon,” Jeffrey Rathke, a former State Department official and senior fellow at CSIS, told [Foreign Policy](#).

He pointed to a number of particularly significant upcoming elections, including Dutch elections in March, the French presidential elections in April and May, and German Bundestag elections in October or November.

“It’s important for the United States and other countries that could be subjected to the same activity to stand together now and to make clear that they will not leave these kinds of attempts at subversion unanswered,” he said.

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## Trump Campaign Denies Apologizing to Serbia for U.S. Bombings That Stopped Genocide

BY **MOLLY O'TOOLE**

OCTOBER 13, 2016 - 1:34 PM

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*Editor's Note: A previous version of this story, citing other published accounts, said GOP nominee Donald Trump had apologized for the 1990s U.S. bombing campaign in the Balkans. The Trump campaign has denied the reports, although the Serbian news magazine that initially published the **interview** has not corrected its story. Foreign Policy has updated its own report to reflect the conflicting accounts.*

In a normal election year, the story would quickly have been dismissed as too bizarre to be true: An American presidential nominee apologizing to Serbia for a decades-old, U.S.-led bombing campaign to stop genocide.

But in the topsy-turvy 2016 race, with Republican candidate Donald Trump looking to deflect allegations of sexual assault, Thursday's **report** by the Serbian magazine Nedeljnik seemed plausible enough to multiple American media outlets. It quoted Trump calling the Serbian bombings "a big mistake" and blaming the administration of then-President Bill Clinton, a Democrat, for making "a mess" of the Balkans.

Nedeljnik, widely considered a legitimate journal, was still running its explosive Trump story as of **Thursday afternoon**. But Trump's camp said the real estate magnate was never interviewed by Nedeljnik's reporters or editors, and has not apologized for the 1990s air campaign that helped stave off potential civilian slaughter in Bosnia and Kosovo.

"This was a hoax and we look forward to receiving a formal retraction and apology from all involved," said Jason Miller, Trump's senior communications advisor.

Nedeljnik's managing editor, Marko Prelevic, told **BuzzFeed** that the magazine coordinated the interview through a Serbian-American actor, Vladimir Rajcic, who claims **close ties** to Trump's running mate, Indiana Gov. Mike Pence. Prelevic said Nedeljnik received emailed responses from Trump advisor Suzanne Ryder Jaworowski, the campaign's Indiana state director.

By late Thursday afternoon, the magazine's editorial board issued an **explanation** of how the interview was obtained and admitted it should have vetted its sourcing more rigorously, according to an English translation. However, it still did not correct its reporting. Nedeljnik confirmed to FP it had taken down its interview "for the time being, and until we get to the end of this" in order to investigate its internal reporting, noting Rajcic continues to maintain the interview's authenticity.

Rajcic is **currently running** for president of Serbia in the 2017 election there, according to this **site**. On his **Facebook** page, he brags about Pence's recent vice presidential debate performance. Jaworowski told **Politico** she met a man of Serbian descent at a fundraiser who said he was running for president of Serbia, and expressed interest in supporting the campaign.

In the Trump campaign denial, Jaworowski said, "Regarding the article about a media interview with a Serbian politician and Mr. Trump via my email, this is completely false. I have never served as a conduit to interview Mr. Trump for anyone."

During the Clinton-era conflict, Serbian militias engaged in **ethnic cleansing** against predominantly Muslim communities as Yugoslavia violently collapsed. The U.S. air strikes resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties, but NATO **credited** them with stopping a potential genocide. Clinton's decision to intervene **greatly influenced** the thinking of Trump's current rival, Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, on the use of American military force abroad.

The Nedeljnik report was explosive not just because it seemed to backtrack on established U.S. policy. It also came as Trump is desperate to deflect criticism from the growing list of women accusing the Republican presidential nominee of **sexual assault**. And that appeared to draw an uncomfortable parallel with Bill Clinton, who was accused of his own "**Wag the Dog**" military campaign against a terror network linked to Osama bin Laden as the White House reeled from the Monica Lewinsky sex scandal in 1998.

For his part, Trump has advocated an "America First" foreign policy in response to what he describes as disastrous nation-building military misadventures by Hillary Clinton and the Washington establishment. The U.S. should instead be pulling back from international commitments and such interventions, he has argued – with two notable exceptions.

As recently as the second presidential **debate** last Sunday, in response to a question about the tape scandal, Trump pledged again to "knock the hell out of ISIS," and recommended a military alliance with Russia.

Trump's alleged comments to Nedeljnik — if they are true — would also represent a turnabout toward Serbia, given a October 2015 interview with British newspaper *The Guardian*. "If there's a problem going on in the world, and you can solve the problem," the United States may decide to intervene, Trump **said** then.

Given the example of Bill Clinton's decision to intervene in Kosovo to prevent ethnic cleansing, he said, "It's OK, sure."

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