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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

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By Barry Grey
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Democrats' report confirms anti-Russia axis of impeachment inquiry

On Tuesday, the Democratic-controlled House Intelligence Committee, in a party-line vote, approved the majority report on the impeachment inquiry against President Donald Trump. All of the Democrats on the committee voted in favor and all of the Republicans voted against the Democrats' report. The Republicans unanimously endorsed a minority report that was released on Monday.

The Intelligence Committee report will now be referred to the House Judiciary Committee, which is expected to hold a number of hearings and then draw up articles of impeachment. On Wednesday, the Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing on the historical and political basis for impeachment, taking testimony from four prominent law school professors.

Once approved by the Democratic majority on the Judiciary Committee, the articles of impeachment will be brought to the floor of the House for a vote. As of now, it is anticipated that the House will vote to impeach Trump before the end of December, after which the matter will go to the Republican-controlled Senate for a trial.



The report from Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee on the impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump. (AP Photo/Jon Elswick)

Trump's conviction and removal from office, which require a two-thirds vote by the Senate, is considered extremely unlikely.

In announcing the release Tuesday afternoon of the Intelligence Committee's majority report, committee chairman Adam Schiff (Democrat from California) said, "This is not about Ukraine. It is about our democracy."

The exact opposite is the case. The Democrats' 300-page report is all about Ukraine and the central role it occupies in the geo-strategic operations of the United States directed against Russia. It has nothing to do with the defense of democratic rights.

The basic argument the document makes is that Trump, by temporarily withholding military aid and diplomatic support from the right-wing, anti-Russian government in Kiev, in an attempt to bully Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky into announcing a corruption investigation against Hunter Biden, the son of Trump's potential opponent in the 2020 elections, had undermined US national security.

The latter term is a euphemism for the global interests of US imperialism. Behind the phrases about "abuse of power" and placing "personal and political interests" above the interests of the "nation," Trump's real crime, the document makes clear, is drifting from the aggressive anti-Russian posture adopted by the Obama administration and supported by the dominant factions of the military/intelligence and foreign policy establishments.

The document cites numerous State Department and National Security Council officials who testified during the two weeks of public impeachment hearings and condemned Trump for jeopardizing the buildup of Ukraine as a pliant semi-colony and front-line state

in the struggle against Russia. At several points it repeats their references to the “hot war” being fought by Washington's Ukraine proxies against Russian-backed forces in eastern Ukraine and the need to escalate US military backing for the regime.

It echoes their praise for a regime that came into being in the first place in a 2014 coup carried out by US-backed and fascist-led militias, which overthrew the elected, pro-Russian government of Viktor Yanukovich in the so-called “Maidan revolution.” Among those hailed by the Democrats’ star witnesses was Ukrainian Interior Minister Arsen Avakov, a sponsor of the fascist Azov Battalion, which glorifies Ukrainians who collaborated with the Nazis during World War II against the Soviet Union and were complicit in the slaughter of Ukrainian Jews.

The document is permeated with a war-mongering and aggressive sentiment against Russia, continuing, in a new form, the concocted narrative of massive Russian interference in the 2016 election and collusion by the Trump campaign with the Putin regime. The phrase “Russian aggression” occurs 20 times. It describes Ukraine as “a bulwark against Russian aggression in Europe.”

The Democratic leadership chose to time the passage of a House resolution on Tuesday opposing Trump’s talk of inviting Russia to next year's G-7 summit to coincide with the forwarding of the impeachment report to the Judiciary Committee.

The document entirely excludes, in keeping with the Democratic impeachment drive as a whole, Trump's real attacks on democratic rights: the mass incarceration of immigrants and separation of children from their parents, the illegal diversion of funds to build the border wall with Mexico, the encouragement and incitement of far-right and fascistic forces.

Not only is the impeachment inquiry centered on Ukraine, it is largely based on a single incident: the July 25 telephone call between Trump and Zelensky in which Trump demanded as a “favor” a public announcement by the Ukrainian president of an investigation into Hunter Biden's lucrative position on the board of a Ukrainian gas company that was under investigation for corruption, as well as an investigation of alleged Ukrainian support for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election.

In his preface to the report, Schiff writes:

At the center of this investigation is the memorandum prepared following President Trump’s July 25, 2019 phone call with Ukraine’s president, which the White House

declassified and released under significant public pressure. The call record alone is stark evidence of misconduct; a demonstration of the president's prioritization of his personal political benefit over the national interest.

Schiff presents the core of the impeachment case as follows:

In pressuring President Zelensky to carry out his demand, President Trump withheld a White House meeting desperately sought by the Ukrainian President, and critical US military assistance to fight Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine.

The president engaged in this course of conduct for the benefit of his own presidential reelection, to harm the election prospects of a political rival, and to influence our nation's upcoming presidential election to his advantage. In doing so, the president placed his own personal and political interests above the national interests of the United States, sought to undermine the integrity of the US presidential election process, and endangered US national security.

The report implicates other top administration officials as participants in the pressure campaign against Ukraine, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Vice President Mike Pence, Acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney and former Energy Secretary Rick Perry.

It includes a section on Trump's obstruction of the impeachment inquiry, which documents the White House's effort to impose a total ban on cooperation with the congressional investigation. It notes: "The White House, Department of State, Department of Defense, Office of Management and Budget, and Department of Energy refused to produce a single document in response to our subpoenas."

It lists 12 current or former administration officials who refused to testify, 10 of whom defied subpoenas. The list includes Mick Mulvaney, John Bolton and Rick Perry. The report states, "Indeed, it would be hard to imagine a stronger or more complete case of obstruction than that demonstrated by the president since the inquiry began," strongly suggesting that the Judiciary Committee will include in its articles of impeachment a charge of obstruction of Congress.

The Republican minority report rejects all of the Democrats' allegations, declaring, improbably, that there was no political motivation behind Trump's demand that Zelensky announce a probe of the Bidens. The Republicans' basic contention, however, that the

impeachment inquiry is a political operation arising from differences over policy toward Russia, is undoubtedly true.

Their report states: “The fundamental disagreement apparent in the Democrats’ impeachment inquiry is a difference of world views and a discomfit with President Trump’s policy decisions.”

In their findings, the Republicans reject the general media presentation of the corruption allegations against the Bidens as completely unfounded, noting that the “Obama State Department noted concerns about Hunter Biden’s relationship with [the gas company] Burisma in 2015 and 2016.”

They also cite “indisputable evidence” that “senior Ukrainian government officials opposed President Trump’s candidacy in the 2016 election and did so publicly,” as well as media reports that the Democratic National Committee worked with the Ukrainian Embassy to gather negative information on then-candidate Trump.

Notwithstanding the bitter differences over policy toward Russia between the Trump administration and the dominant factions of the national security apparatus, for whom the Democrats speak, there is bipartisan support for the anti-Russian regime in Kiev and the drive to remove Russia as an obstacle to US hegemony in the Middle East and Eurasia. Both factions in the conflict are right-wing and pro-war, posing the very real danger of a military conflict between the world's two biggest nuclear powers.

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