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By Barry Grey
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House Judiciary Committee votes to approve articles of impeachment against Trump

The House Judiciary Committee voted Friday morning to approve two articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump Thursday, bringing him closer to becoming the fourth US president to face impeachment by the House of Representatives.

The articles, charging Trump with abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, are expected to be voted on by the full House next week. While worried articles are appearing in the press about likely Democratic defections, it is expected that the Democrats will have sufficient votes to withstand a solid “no” vote by House Republicans.

The issue will then go to the Republican-controlled Senate, which is expected to hold a trial on the impeachment charges next month. It would take a major defection by Senate Republicans to obtain the two-thirds vote needed to convict and remove Trump from office.

The House Judiciary Committee vote followed two days of acrimonious debate on the committee, which were televised by the major cable news networks. The vote came by 23-17, along strict party lines, with all Republicans on the committee voting against, and all Democrats supporting it.



House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler (top center) and Rep. Doug Collins (right) makes his opening statement during a markup of the articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump on Capitol Hill in Washington [Photo: AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite]

The debate has underscored the right-wing basis of the Democrats' impeachment drive. On Wednesday, the Democratic chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Jerrold Nadler, set the tone for the Democrats in his opening remarks in the debate. He began by citing the July 25 telephone call by Trump with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in which Trump implied that Zelensky would have to announce a corruption investigation into Hunter Biden, the son of Joe Biden, Trump's potential opponent in the 2020 election, in return for the release of the military aid.

The younger Biden was awarded a lucrative position on the board of a Ukrainian gas company after his father was elected vice president in the Obama administration and given the Ukraine portfolio.

"On July 25 of this year, when he spoke to President Zelensky of Ukraine by telephone," Nadler said, "President Trump had the upper hand. Ukraine had been invaded by Russia. Zelensky had only recently been elected. He badly needed our help. He needed it in the form of military aid already appropriated by Congress because of our national security interest in Ukraine. And he needed help with an oval office meeting to show the world that the US stands with him against Russian aggression."

He went on to make the improbable claim that Trump had to be removed from office in advance of next year's election because otherwise Trump, in cahoots with Russia and/or

other foreign powers, would rig the election—as he supposedly had done with Russian President Putin’s help in 2016.

“Why is this necessary now? Why do we need to impeach the president? Why not let the next election handle it?” Nadler asked.

“We cannot rely on an election to solve our problems when the president threatens the very integrity of that election. Nor can we sit on our hands while the president undermines our national security and while he allows his personal interests and the interests of our adversary Russia to advance.”

This line of anti-Russian hysteria, a continuation and escalation of the Democrats’ anti-Russia campaign that had produced the abortive investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, was echoed by virtually every other Democrat in the debate.

For example, both Madeleine Dean of Pennsylvania and Hakeem Jeffries of New York praised the right-wing anti-Russia hawks who gave public testimony in the House Intelligence Committee hearings that preceded the proceedings in the Judiciary Committee. Dean cited the “powerful and extraordinary” testimony of Fiona Hill, the top aide to former national security adviser and infamous war hawk John Bolton. Jeffries named Hill, Army Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vindman and others who gave testimony critical of Trump’s handling of Ukraine, saying, “Those witnesses were patriots.”

Ted Deutch of Florida said of Trump: “He degrades diplomats and lashes out at law enforcement, questions the patriotism of those who have bled on the battlefield. He questions America’s leadership in the world and believes Russia over our intelligence community, over our allies and over Ukraine.”

Unlike the impeachment proceedings against Richard Nixon, mounted in response to serious violations of democratic rights bound up with illegal efforts to suppress opposition to the Vietnam War, this impeachment is being carried out on the grounds that Trump, by temporarily withholding \$391 million in military aid to the right-wing, anti-Russian government in Ukraine, had undermined US national security—a code word for Washington’s global imperialist interests.

The driving forces behind impeachment are the CIA and sections of the FBI and other intelligence and police agencies, for whom the Democrats are fronting, which consider Trump insufficiently aggressive in pursuing Washington’s confrontation with Russia. In

that diplomatic, economic and military campaign, the Ukrainian regime, installed in a US-backed and fascist-led coup in 2014, is considered to occupy a critical place.

This first-ever “national security” impeachment marks a major escalation of the intervention of the military/intelligence apparatus into American domestic politics. It is an expression of the decay of American democracy and the mounting crisis of rule of American capitalism, intensified by an international upsurge of the class struggle.

It is a bitter conflict between two reactionary factions of the ruling class, in which there is no democratic or progressive content on either side. The outcome, whichever side wins, will be a further turn to the right and an intensified assault on democratic rights.

The Democrats are not seeking to remove the billionaire fascist in the White House for incarcerating immigrant children in concentration camps, slashing food stamps and Medicaid while handing the corporations trillions in tax cuts, or prosecuting murderous wars in the Middle East, subverting governments in Latin America and threatening the nuclear destruction of Iran and North Korea.

On the contrary, in the midst of the impeachment spectacle, the Democrats have signed on to Trump’s anti-China USMCA trade pact with Mexico and Canada and voted by a large majority for his record \$738 billion war budget. The latter is stripped of an earlier provision barring Trump from diverting Pentagon funds to build his border wall. It sanctions the militarization of outer space in the form of a new military branch called the “Space Force.”

Even as the Democrats pushed for Trump’s removal by invoking the specter of foreign attacks on American democracy and the 2020 elections, the Justice Department inspector general, Michael Horowitz, released a 400-page report documenting the massive, secret and antidemocratic intervention of the FBI into the 2016 elections, making clear that the chief threat to democratic rights comes not from abroad, but from the capitalist state.

In his report on the origins of the FBI investigation into supposed Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election and collusion by the Trump campaign, which subsequently morphed into a counterintelligence investigation into then-President Trump and the Muller probe, Horowitz said he found no evidence of political bias by the FBI. That conclusion was touted by the Democrats and the bulk of the corporate media as a definitive refutation of White House claims that Trump was the target of a “deep state” conspiracy against him.

More significant, however, was Horowitz's documentation of the flimsy basis on which the probe of Trump was launched and the multiple omissions, distortions and lies contained in a series of applications to the secret Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC) for warrants to wiretap former Trump campaign aide Carter Page.

Page remained under electronic surveillance for nearly a year, mostly while Trump was the sitting president. Among the 17 "inaccuracies" and "errors" in the FISC applications for warrants against Page listed in the inspector general's report was the omission of the fact that the so-called "Steele dossier," which was cited as the main basis for a wiretap warrant, had been paid for by the Democratic National Committee.

Another was the fact that the supposed Russian spy Page worked for the CIA. Meetings he held with Russian officials that were presented as potentially incriminating had taken place while he was a CIA operative.

Among other things, Horowitz's report documented how easily the FBI can open an investigation against any individual with only the slightest "articulable factual basis."

At a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on the inspector general's report held Wednesday, simultaneous with the opening day of the Judiciary Committee debate on the articles of impeachment, Republican Chairman Lindsey Graham, a right-wing warmonger, presented a detailed and damning outline of Horowitz's findings, concluding that the FBI investigation was a "criminal conspiracy."

The ranking Democrat, Dianne Feinstein, virtually ignored these issues and repeated the narrative that the inspector general's report debunked Republican attacks on the FBI's handling of the case. "There is no deep state," she declared. This Democratic cover-up of the police state operations of the FBI and CIA allows Trump and his far-right and fascistic allies to posture as defenders of democratic rights.

Even the *New York Times*, which has spearheaded the anti-Russia campaign and the impeachment drive against Trump, felt obliged to publish a front-page article criticizing the FBI's violations of democratic rights in its investigation of Trump.

The *Times* wrote: "The Justice Department's independent inspector general, Michael E. Horowitz, and his team uncovered a staggeringly dysfunctional and error-ridden process in how the FBI went about obtaining and renewing court permission under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, to wiretap Carter Page, a former Trump campaign adviser."

It went on to cite Hina Shamsi of the American Civil Liberties Union, who said, “The litany of problems with the Carter Page surveillance applications demonstrates how the secrecy shrouding the government’s one-sided FISA approval process breeds abuse.”

It noted that in 2018, according to official records, out of 1,080 requests for warrants by the government, the FISA court fully denied only one.

This did not prevent the *Times*, which said nothing about the implications of the FBI abuse for the legitimacy of the Democrats’ impeachment drive, from publishing on the same day an editorial (“Ukraine’s President Stands Alone Against Russia) citing Zelensky’s one-on-one meeting on Monday with Putin and denouncing Trump for abandoning Kiev and aiding Moscow.

The *Times* singled out for condemnation Trump’s meeting on Tuesday with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

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