

CONFIDENTIAL

Aspen Digital Hack-and-Dump Working Group — September 2020

EXERCISE :: The Burisma Leak

Day One: Monday, October 5th

- Anonymous website, BIDENCRIMES.info, and a Twitter account, @HUNTERLOLZ, begin posting documents that purport to be from Burisma, tied to Hunter Biden. Splashed across the top of the site, in English, is “Joe Biden betrayed america before for \$\$\$\$. He’ll do it again.” Initially, the documents, mostly in Ukrainian, appear to be minutes of various Burisma board meetings, internal emails, and financial records. There is initially no sign of a smoking gun.
 - NOTE: The website appears to have been first registered in 2016. No ownership information is public. The Twitter account was created in 2014, oddly just before Hunter joined the Burisma board. It has tweeted once and follows one person.

Day Two: Tuesday, October 6th

- The Drudge Report links to the anonymous website, BIDENCRIMES.info, and the site is quickly picked up by other fringe media and begins to spread on social media sites.

Day Three: Wednesday, October 7th

- *Fox & Friends* discusses BIDENCRIMES.info in its 7 a.m. block. @RealDonaldTrump tweets six minutes later, “Is Joe Biden biggest criminal of all time? Check out @HUNTERLOLZ.”
- Three reporters (Dina Temple-Rason, Donie O’Sullivan, and Ellen Nakashima) are contacted by an anonymous ProtonMail account, BIDENCRIMES@protonmail.com, and each sent a different document. None of the documents have appeared on the public website. They are each told they are the only reporter receiving a specific document.
 - Dina’s document purports to be a ledger of payments showing that Hunter Biden was paid \$3 million over two months in 2015 by Burisma, far more than had been reported publicly before.
 - Donie’s document is a 2016 email, purportedly from Hunter to his father, dated the evening before the firing of prosecutor Viktor Shokin, simply titled “Burisma,” and the body of which reads: “I really need you to do this for me.”
 - Ellen’s document purports to be the board contract between Burisma and Hunter.
- In Ukraine, Burisma announces that it has no evidence of any hack of its servers, disavows all files as forgeries.

Day Four: Thursday, October 8th

- The Biden campaign, adopting the policy of Hillary Clinton's campaign in 2016 and the Macron campaign, says they will not confirm the veracity of any documents.
- CrowdStrike announces, without further detail, it has reason to believe that BIDENCRIMES.info is the work of Fancy Bear (APT 28).
- CNN's Jim Scuitto reports an anonymous Cloudflare executive who says that he doubts the CrowdStrike appraisal; Cloudflare believes that no foreign actor is involved and has evidence that BIDENLEAKS.info is being hosted and run by Americans.
- At 4 p.m., the *Washington Post* publishes a story by Ellen Nakashima confirming that the Burisma board contract given to her is legitimate; there is no wrongdoing evident or alleged in the document, but Burisma sources confirm the document is real.
- Cesar Conde, the chairman of NBC News, announces that because of the suspicion that the BIDENCRIMES.info leaks are coming from a foreign power with a goal of undermining America's free and fair elections, no aspect of NBC News or MSNBC will report on the allegations or use the materials as the basis for reporting. In his statement, carried live on the evening news with Lester Holt, he asks all other news organizations to follow NBC's leadership. The Guardian quickly announces it will follow the same principle, as does The Huffington Post.
- At Ohio Trump rally that night, crowd starts chanting "LOCK HIM UP." President Trump, at podium, pumps his fists as the crowd chants.

Day Five: Friday, October 9th

- In a statement released at 9 a.m. and signed only by him, Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe says he has no reason to believe the documents posted by BIDENCRIMES.info are forgeries, nor does the IC have reason to believe the website is a Russian operation.
- At 11 a.m., on the House floor, House Intelligence Chair Adam Schiff says that according to his briefings, the IC is not being forthright with the American people about the source and veracity of the leaks.
- Also at 11 a.m., Mandiant releases a short statement saying it has traced the source of BIDENLEAKS.info to infrastructure consistent with China's Ministry of State Security.

- At 2 p.m., @HUNTERLOLZ tweets a link out to a .zip file that appears to contain a new tranche of 20,000 documents, mostly in Ukrainian, stolen from Burisma and posted on BIDENCRIMES.info.
- All but simultaneously, at 2:01 p.m., @DonaldJTrumpJr, @TeamTrump, and @parscale all retweet the @HUNTERLOLZ post.
- By 3 p.m., Twitter determines that the hosting service for the .zip tweeted by @HUNTERLOLZ traces back to a server in Hong Kong.
- That afternoon, Facebook's sources inside the IC tell Facebook to be wary about the DNI's statement.
- At 5 p.m., Dina Temple-Raston airs an NPR story saying that she has confirmed the \$3 million payment document she received is fake.

Day Six: Saturday, October 10th

- Overnight, progressive blogger Josh Marshall notices and tweets out one document in the new tranche of .zip files that appears to be a confirmation of a wire transfer for \$1 million from Deutsche Bank to an off-shore account in the name of Hunter Biden, dated two days after the firing of the chief prosecutor, Shokin. Overnight, independent security researchers and news organizations find the majority of the .zip files are authentic, but some are manipulated. First Draft News tweets an hour after Josh's tweet that his document appears to be an authentic Burisma document but has been edited—what was edited is unclear.
- At 10 a.m., the *New York Times* posts a story saying that two anonymous "senior Justice Department officials" in Washington say that the acting U.S. attorney in D.C. has empaneled a grand jury to investigate Joe Biden.

Day Seven: Sunday, October 11th

- On the Sunday shows, Biden campaign staff dismiss the entire hack-and-leak as dirty tricks by Vladimir Putin.
- After the morning shows air, *The Daily Beast* quotes two "former senior intelligence officials" that the directors of the CIA and NSA refused to sign onto Ratcliffe's Friday statement, although sources differ why they did not sign it. David Sanger matches that reporting an hour later.
- Alex Berenson announces on Twitter that he's conducted an interview, via DM, with the person behind @HUNTERLOLZ and that he believes the person is an American.

Day Eight: Monday, October 12th

- At 7:15 a.m., President Trump calls into *Fox & Friends* and says he hopes the FBI will investigate Joe Biden.
- At 9 a.m., Attorney General Bill Barr holds a press conference to say the American people deserve the truth and that he has instructed the FBI to verify the allegations of Joe Biden and Hunter Biden's corruption. He announces that the Justice Department is investigating wrongdoing by Hunter Biden and Joe Biden for money laundering, tax fraud, theft of honest services, and acting as an unregistered foreign agent. In response to a reporter's question, he volunteers that he believes Joe Biden should submit to an FBI interview within days.
- At 11 a.m., Senator Richard Blumenthal says the American people are being lied to and demands in a CNN interview, "Paul Nakasone, Gina Haspel, and Chris Wray owe Americans the truth. I can't say more than that."
- At 2 p.m., Jim Comey tweets "FBI agents tell me they are being silenced about the truth. Donald Trump is illegally coordinating with Putin. He must resign."
- At 7:30 p.m., Rudy Giuliani says on Fox News that he was right all along re: 2019 Ukraine pressure campaign.

Day Nine: Tuesday, October 13th

- @RealDonaldTrump tweets at 6:15 a.m.: "See, Ukraine phone call was perfect — I knew Sleepy Joe was actually Crooked Joe! Tell FBI: LOCK HIM UP!"

Day Ten: Wednesday, October 14th

- Rep. Devin Nunes, Sen. Tom Cotton, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announce they will travel immediately to Kiev to get Burisma's cooperation with the unfolding investigation. They depart that night on an official US government jet.

Day Eleven: Thursday, October 15th

- The second presidential debate