

Hysteria on air: USA Today and CNN go full “James Bond” mode

by Walid Phares



[CNN](#) posted pieces focusing on “who in the Trump campaign met with the Russian ambassador.” Among the advisors from the Trump campaign they had an interest in was – yours truly. Somehow – probably assuming that since I was at the Republican Convention in Cleveland last summer – they concluded that I “met with” the now famous Russian ambassador Kislyak who – along with 50 other ambassadors – was in the conference room where I spoke and where many others spoke as well, including Attorney General Jeff Sessions. Naturally, the press jumped to the conclusion that I actually met with ambassador Kislyak. You know, the James Bondian brand of journalism.

Other advisors have met him at the Convention? Could be. That’s why diplomats attend Presidential Conventions. I did not meet with the Russian ambassador, though I met with many other diplomats – the same ambassadors and diplomats who were wining and dining with the foreign policy advisors for the

Clinton campaign the following week in Philadelphia. More importantly CNN and USA Today, as well as other opposition media, failed to mention that the State Department of the Obama Administration was the one who organized and oversaw the diplomatic engagements at both Conventions. So, the wild hallucinations of the opposition media are dissipating into thin air.

But putting that aside, so that the public sees clearly; there are many areas of disagreement with Russia, and in some areas there are even real tensions. We are confronting Russia's allies in the Middle East directly, including Iran and Hezbollah. But there are areas where the US and Russia could possibly come together, including the fight against ISIS and other Jihadists. Any security plan in Syria will require talks between the two governments. That is the policy toward Russia adopted in Europe and the Gulf: push against what you reject, and explore what can be done together against terrorist forces. Obama's Secretary of State Kerry has been communicating with the Russians over Syria, till his last day in office, or so. He has met the Russian leadership more than the entire two political parties of the US, combined. Not just an ambassador, but the top leadership in the Kremlin.

And to those who claim the UN is the place from which to initiate international initiatives, remember that each one of the five permanent members at the UNSC has a veto and Russia is one of them.

Back to Washington DC: As far as we know, Russia's embassy is still open and its diplomats – like all other diplomats from countries all around the world – meet with almost everyone. The US embassy in Moscow is open and US diplomats meet with Russians. This is all in accord with international law. Sanctions did nothing to forbid these meetings in either capital. Citizens, lawmakers, or officials can decide on their own if they wish to meet, have lunch or invite these diplomats to their national conventions. If the US Government wishes to

stop any contact between Americans and Russians it can simply issue an executive order. But there is no such E.O. So what are the opposition talking heads trying to say? If there is any palpable issue to be addressed, including a national security challenge, focus on the issue and resolve it. If it is partisan politics, start with the famous statement by President Obama to Prime Minister Medvedev: "After this election, I will be more flexible with you."

At this point the "piranha journalists" are left with no food to consume. Their problem is that they have no facts. And if they do find out what was on the lunch menu at the Republican National Convention diplomatic event and compare the dishes with the Democratic event's menu, it would be a much better story than their current overwrought hallucinations. Hence, you can understand why CNN is parading my picture along with other Trump advisors under the title of "contacts with Russia." Obviously they know -and the public does too- that it is not about Russia, in my case, it is about Iran. The Iran regime lobby is trying to stir the focus away from the Iran deal, to a "Russia file."

They can dodge the bigger shadow looming over the opposition, as long as they want, the file on the Iran Deal is getting heavier and heavier. And no Russian tale can help dodge what is coming.