

The National Tragedy of Hunter Biden's Laptop



Lee Smith writes in [Tablet](#):

The recent release of more gigabytes of images and information from Hunter Biden's laptop adds to the evidence that the all-out elite effort to bury the scandal before the 2020 election wasn't just to protect Joe Biden, the preferred candidate of the American oligarchy. Sure, the 50-plus senior U.S. intelligence professionals who [signed a letter](#) claiming the laptop's contents were "Russian disinformation" wanted to stop Donald Trump from sending angry tweets at them, but the laptop suggests there was much more at stake.

The U.S. spy chiefs who signed that infamously misleading letter—including John Brennan, Leon Panetta, Michael Hayden,

and James Clapper—had directed America’s foreign intelligence services while Biden was vice president and before that chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. They knew what his son Hunter was doing abroad, because it was their job to know what foreign services know about leading U.S. officials and their families, and how it might affect U.S. national security.

But none of these powerful and experienced men, presumably dedicated to defending the national interest, lifted a finger to stop Hunter Biden—and really, how could they? He was Joe Biden’s son, after all. And by doing nothing about him, the pillars of America’s intelligence community became the curators of the Biden family’s scandal.

When Trump started asking questions in 2019 about Hunter and his father, prompted by Joe Biden’s [public comments](#) about protecting Hunter’s business associates abroad, it became clear that the only way to contain the mushrooming scandal involving key U.S. interests in Ukraine and China—a scandal whose magnitude they had known about for a decade—was to provide the former vice president with all the resources the U.S. government could muster. And that helped make him president.

There is so much data on Hunter Biden’s laptop that it’s hard to keep straight the sequence of [images and information](#) that have come from it since the *New York Post* started sourcing stories to the personal computer in October 2020. The most recent release includes 80,000 images that a Switzerland-based cyber expert recovered from deleted iPad and iPhone accounts backed up on the laptop.

There are more pictures, texts, and emails about the younger Biden’s business deals, drug use, sex life, and family relations. Hunter [referred](#) to his stepmother, first lady Jill Biden, as a “vindictive moron.” There’s a contact nicknamed “Pedo Peter,” which appears to refer to his father: Joe Biden

often used the alias "Peter Henderson," the name of a character in a Tom Clancy novel, when he traveled.

"I saw about two dozen images of young girls in suggestive poses and then stopped looking," says Jack Maxey, a former co-host of Steve Bannon's "War Room" and the source of the laptop data later authenticated by *The Washington Post* and *Daily Mail*. "That's why I keep asking for some sheriff somewhere to get involved and do this the right way," Maxey told me in a phone call. "It has to be done under lawful conditions."

It was Maxey who got *The Washington Post* to admit that the information on Hunter Biden's laptop is genuine. In June 2021, Maxey brought the paper a copy of the hard drive from the computer that Biden left with a Delaware repairman in April 2019. The repairman has said he offered the laptop to the FBI in July of that year and heard nothing back until five months later when the bureau confiscated it from him. That was December 2019, when U.S. spy services were using congressional allies to impeach Donald Trump for asking questions about the Bidens' activities in Ukraine, which are described on Hunter Biden's laptop.

In September 2020, the repairman gave a copy of the hard drive to Rudolph Giuliani's lawyer. The former New York City mayor had been investigating the Bidens' work in Ukraine for nearly two years at that point after receiving a tip from a former federal prosecutor. Giuliani helped disseminate copies of the hard drive, one of which Maxey took to *The Washington Post*.

Nine months after Maxey sat with *Post* reporters to explain the contents of the hard drive, the paper [reported](#) its own independent authentication of 22,000 emails in March of 2022. These included communications regarding a deal with a Chinese energy company that earned Hunter \$5 million, and his work with Burisma, the Ukrainian energy firm that paid him \$83,333 per month to sit on its board. His father later boasted in public that he'd threatened to withhold a \$1 billion loan

guarantee to Ukraine unless the central government in Kyiv fired the prosecutor investigating Burisma. At roughly the same time *The Washington Post* authenticated these emails, *The New York Times* [also verified](#) communications found on Hunter Biden's computer.

So, have America's two most prestigious newsprint organizations at last acknowledged that they were wrong to believe former intelligence officials who claimed the *New York Post's* October 2020 reporting on the Biden laptop was [Russian disinformation](#)? Of course not. They were and remain proud of their role in helping push Trump out of Washington. According to [one survey](#), one out of six Biden voters said that had they known about Hunter's laptop in time, they wouldn't have voted for his father.

What concerned the prestige press wasn't that they'd missed a big story—or that they'd participated in a campaign run by U.S. intelligence services to prevent American voters from learning about the extent of the Bidens' political and moral corruption. Rather, they were worried that an even bigger story about the Bidens might be coming down the road. Maxey says he called the *Post* in March to say he was taking the hard drive to Switzerland to meet with a cyber expert named Vincent Kaufmann who told him he thought he could retrieve material deleted from the laptop.

The *Times* published its story two days after Maxey landed in Zurich, and the *Post* published its own "investigation" two weeks later, pronouncing some of the emails genuine while claiming it was hard to tell with others. As a longtime platform for U.S. intelligence operations—and owned by the same man, Jeff Bezos, who owns the cloud computing technology that Amazon Web Services uses to store the CIA's information—the *Post* wanted to help the White House get ahead of potential problems.

Maxey says that after he saw two dozen images of young girls,

he told Kaufmann not to look at any more. "I don't know how many he looked at," says Maxey. "He was disturbed by what he saw and that no one would do anything about it. He's a moral person with an incredible skillset but has no life experience. He's a 31-year-old guy with a bag of chocolate bars or a Diet Coke in one hand and a computer mouse in the other." Tablet tried to reach Kaufmann for comment, but did not hear back.

Kaufmann began posting some of the material on 4Chan, the anonymous posting board where the messaging operation QAnon started. Users copied the images and text and seeded it on social media platforms like Twitter. Maxey says he never would have released it. "From day one I told Vincent that we can't release any of this material."

Maxey says he also saw information on the laptop that has direct implications for U.S. national security. According to Maxey, this material includes documents relating to Pentagon cyber programs and others regarding former FBI Director Louis Freeh. According to a [previously released email](#) on Hunter's laptop, Freeh worked with him to help a Romanian tycoon evade bribery charges. In April 2016, according to an [earlier trove of emails](#), Freeh deposited \$100,000 in a trust fund for two of Joe Biden's grandchildren.

"Vincent thought the media was covering for the Bidens," says Maxey. "Which is true. He also thought I was shielding them. He couldn't understand why nothing was happening. He couldn't believe people wouldn't protect children, so he felt he needed to deal with it." Maxey says that since Kaufmann posted the material online, he's spoken with "several sheriffs who have reached out to help, and it looks like we can resolve this."

Outside of the *New York Post*, Fox News, and the *Daily Mail*, the press has ignored the latest release, as it did with previous tranches of Hunter's emails. Still, it seems the Biden administration isn't taking any chances. The Treasury Department has [rebuffed](#) requests from Republican lawmakers to

release suspicious activity reports (SARs) related to Hunter Biden that might shed more light on the foreign entanglements outlined in the laptop's information and his father's possible involvement.

While Biden said he never spoke with his son about his business abroad, a voicemail from another recently released laptop cache shows the president was being less than forthright. He knew about his son's business with the Chinese energy firm and one of its top officials, Patrick Ho. After *The New York Times* published a [softball article](#) in December 2018 about Hunter's work with Ho and other businessmen tied to the Chinese Communist Party, Biden left a message for his son saying, "[I think you're clear.](#)"

Of course Hunter was clear: The FBI was watching over him. The bureau knew what he was doing because it had [obtained](#) a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) warrant in 2017 on Ho, who Hunter called the "spy chief of China."

With the spy warrant, U.S. domestic intelligence services had access to every electronic communication between Ho and his business partner, Joe Biden's son. Had the FBI wanted, it would have been able to access Joe Biden's communications as well. The bureau used a FISA warrant on a 2016 Trump campaign adviser to spy on the campaign, Trump's transition team, and then the White House. While the Justice Department [charged](#) and convicted Ho with bribing African officials and money laundering, Hunter Biden, as his father had told him, was in the clear.

Reports like the ones the Treasury Department is now withholding formed the basis of a September 2020 Senate Republican [investigation](#) by Sens. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin and Chuck Grassley of Iowa that documented Hunter Biden's business with foreign officials and companies. It included his relationship with Burisma in Ukraine; the Chinese energy company, which also gave money to the president's brother Jim

and his wife, Sara; and Elena Baturina, the widow of a former mayor of Moscow, from whom Hunter received \$3.5 million.

The FBI tried to [shape reception](#) of the GOP Senate report by going to Johnson a month before its release and telling him he was a target of Russian disinformation. "I asked the briefers what specific evidence they had regarding this warning, and they could not provide me anything other than the generalized warning," Johnson told *The Washington Post*. "I suspected that the briefing was being given to be used at some future date for the purpose that it is now being used."

That is, the FBI told Johnson that he was being targeted by the Russians, then leaked their own comments to the press, so that after the senator's report was published, the bureau's media partners could dismiss it as Russian disinformation—even though it was sourced to Treasury Department documents. Like clockwork, just days after Johnson's report came out, *The New York Times* [called](#) it "a rehashing of unproven allegations that echoed a Russian disinformation campaign."

Giuliani and One America News (OAN) journalists visited Kyiv in December 2019 to pursue the Biden investigation, and came away with a 2016 [audiotape](#) of what appears to be Joe Biden telling then-President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko to bury evidence incriminating them both if the newly elected Trump found it. Is the tape real? Who knows? If anonymous U.S. intelligence officials say that information based on Treasury Department documents are lies made in Moscow, what isn't Russian disinformation? To play it safe, the Biden campaign fed an email query from an OAN reporter to a journalist from *The Atlantic* to frame OAN's reporting as—what else?—"Russian disinformation," a claim *The Atlantic* then sourced back to three U.S. national security officials.

That's how the Oct. 19, 2020, letter signed by more than 50 former U.S. spies worked, too. To substantiate their assessment that the laptop was Russian disinformation, former

U.S. intelligence officials [cited](#) as evidence a *Washington Post* story published four days earlier, which reported that, according to four former U.S. intelligence officials, U.S. intelligence officials had warned the White House that Giuliani—the man who put the laptop in front of American voters—had been targeted by the Russians. In other words, the letter was pre-validated and primed by some of the former spies who signed the letter.

All this raises an important question: Why, when it comes to the Bidens, is it always the Russians who are passing on disinformation? Does Vladimir Putin hate Joe Biden as single-mindedly as he was said to have loved Donald Trump? Are there no other foreign spy services that try to interfere with our political system?

Of course there are: [Chinese intelligence](#), for one. And yet whenever there's bad news about Joe and Hunter Biden, it's only ever fake news generated by the Russians. Russia has been a convenient foil since the 2016 presidential campaign, when Hillary Clinton and associates and U.S. spy chiefs like Brennan, Clapper, and former FBI Director James Comey turned Putin into a one-stop shop for explaining Democratic electoral losses.

But there's something even more obvious going on here: Calling every report on the Biden family's corruption "Russian disinformation" is the preemptive countermeasure U.S. intelligence services have deployed on the off chance Moscow really does release whatever it has on the president and his son—including more hard drives, tapes, or records of financial transactions. At this point, after all the claims American spies have made about "Russian disinformation" looking to undermine the Bidens, who's to say what's true or not?

And what choice did American security agencies have? They couldn't stop Hunter, who had his father's blessing. So they spied on both of them. CIA officer Eric Ciaramella was

detailed to Biden's vice presidential staff, where he was in charge of the Ukraine file—that is, he observed what the Bidens were doing in Kyiv and reported it back to Langley. When Trump started raising questions in July 2019, Ciaramella filed a phony whistleblower's complaint with the intelligence community's inspector general and, using the media and Democratic Party operatives, set in motion impeachment proceedings against the president.

With the fall and winter 2019-20 impeachment hearings indelibly establishing candidate Biden as Trump's true nemesis, the Democratic nomination was virtually guaranteed. All that remained was to vanquish Bernie Sanders by promising to accommodate the also-rans. Pete Buttigieg was made transportation secretary, Amy Klobuchar and Elizabeth Warren were whisked back to the Senate with gold stars, while the candidate who folded long before any of them after calling Biden a racist was chosen to be his vice president, reportedly over the soon-to-be first lady's objection.

Anti-Biden opposition leaders argue that U.S. spy services are acting as his private enforcers. It's not hard to see why. The Department of Justice sends armed agents against dissident journalists like James O'Keefe and former Trump officials like Jeffrey Clark, and they'll likely do the same to Trump. The point of the congressional January 6 committee, after all, was to establish the basis for the DOJ to indict Trump sometime in the fall, shortly before midterm elections, with something like the obstruction of justice case Robert Mueller failed to make with his two-year-long Russia probe.

Attempting to convict a former president and his aides and supporters because they remain an electoral threat is a signature banana republic move, but Joe Biden is no *caudillo*. Rather, he's a frontman for America's national security state and its foreign wars. Since when does a president feel comfortable or compelled to tell the voting public in an election year that their food and transportation costs will

continue to rise indefinitely with no benefit to them, and to start getting used to it? When the commander in chief with a congressional majority says there's nothing he can do to protect the electorate from foreign actors who, in his own telling, are responsible for the price hikes crushing American households, he is confessing that he is not really in charge. The logical assumption is that the war in Ukraine is being used and reframed as yet another scheme—like the Green New Deal, COVID lockdowns, and vaccine mandates—to transfer U.S. taxpayer money to the oligarchs.

It hardly needs to be said at this point that, contrary to media reporting on the left and right, there is no actual investigation of Hunter Biden's laptop. In August 2020, an FBI agent who played a role in framing Trump as a Russian agent dismissed the laptop as Russian disinformation. This assessment, according to a recent [letter](#) from Sen. Grassley, caused the FBI's investigative activity to cease. It doesn't matter how damning the laptop's contents might be, or whether they include child pornography or photographs of Joe Biden cashing checks from China. Whatever investigation might exist is performative, meant to show that the agencies are treating the president's son like any other U.S. citizen. It's a Potemkin investigation, obscuring the wasteland that was once the constitutional order before 9/11 legitimized the intelligence agencies' ruinous attacks on it.

Still, even without a trial, it's clear that Hunter Biden has enjoyed one of the most maniacally reckless careers in American history. What distinguishes him from real daredevils, like rock stars, test pilots, and terrorists, is that he always worked with a safety net—one billed to the American public, which will continue to pay dearly for the excess his father afforded him.

Outsiders can't know the character of the tragedies and ambitions that push families together and drive them apart. Maybe Joe Biden thought that facilitating Hunter's access to

dangerous foreign officials and corrupt foreign companies would toughen him up. That would be something like an imperial American version of the Prince Hal path to greatness. Or maybe the psychology isn't very complicated at all, and it's just the saddest story about an American political family that will never be told.