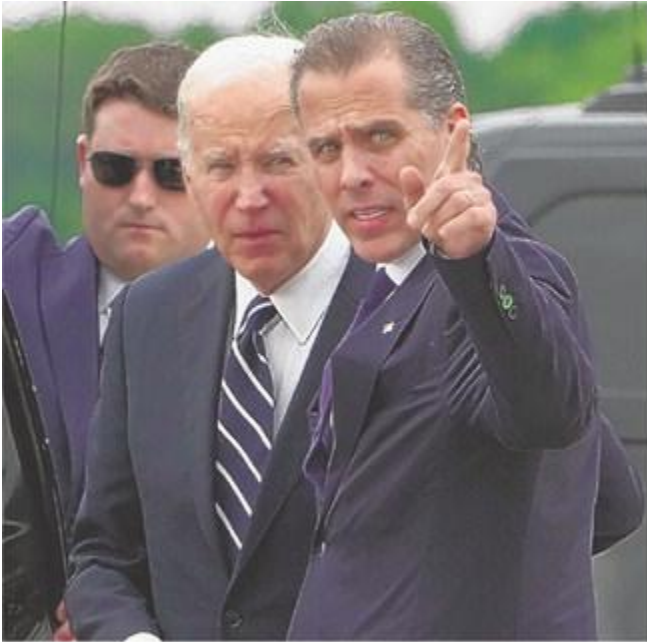


FBI set up unit to shield Bidens from corruption claims

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The FBI set up a secret unit in 2019 to label allegations of corruption against Joseph R. Biden and his son Hunter as “Russian disinformation” at a time when the former vice president was running for president. The unit tagged prominent Republicans, such as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Rep. Devin Nunes, as channels for supposed Russian lies.

The FBI’s Foreign Influence Task Force-Russia assembled a special group of analysts, code-named “**Round River**,” in December 2019, just

as House Democrats were impeaching President Trump.

Round River’s task was to compile years of intelligence information gathered from confidential human sources on Mr. Biden’s diplomatic dealings in Ukraine and then brief Congress that any anti-Biden reports were Russian fakes.

This month, the Trump White House disclosed Round River’s existence by releasing two documents.

The White House disclosed documents this month that a secret FBI unit was created to protect then-Democratic presidential candidate Joseph R. Biden and his son Hunter from allegations of corruption.

One is an FBI spreadsheet listing “conduits” — media figures, Republicans and others — for the supposed disinformation. It also identifies victims or “targets,” including Mr. Biden and his son Hunter.

The second document is a declassified report by Mr. Trump’s director of national intelligence. This memo lays out Round River’s creation, which stretched into the presidential campaign of Mr. Biden versus incumbent Trump. It also lists some of the allegations the team dismissed.

An analysis by The Washington Times shows that at least one allegation was spot on.

Mr. Trump had been through two plus years of FBI investigation. Unlike Round River, which sought to debunk Russian charges against Mr. Biden, the FBI accepted as gospel a Democrat financed, Russian-sourced dossier on Mr. Trump.

Its 35-page dossier accused Mr. Trump and his aides of conspiring with Moscow to influence the 2016 presidential election. The FBI took the unproven dossier to judges and vouched for it to obtain wiretap authorizations. FBI Director James B. Comey briefed the dossier to President Obama, intelligence agencies for a damning report on Mr. Trump and to the president-elect himself in January 2017.

None of the dozen or so criminal claims proved to be true, according to a 2023 special counsel report.



Mr. Biden served as diplomatic point man for Ukraine as vice president until 2017. Hunter Biden in 2014 won a \$1 million-a-year appointment to the board of Burisma, Ukraine's natural gas conglomerate whose oligarch owner was an ally of Moscow. The arrangement fueled the rumors of corruption **Round River** would seek to dispel.

Mr. Trump conducted a July 2019 phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in which he asked what the Bidens were up to in his country. The phone call contents leaked, and House Democrats used it to impeach Mr. Trump.

The label "Russian disinformation" was not used only by Round River.

Intelligence veterans from the Obama administration found the phrase came in handy for protecting Mr. Biden's 2020 campaign.

In October 2020, the New York Post broke a bombshell. It obtained the copious contents of Hunter Biden's work laptop left at a Wilmington, Delaware, repair shop.

The emails told the story of a son cashing in on his father's status by receiving large payments from China, Russia, Ukraine and other countries.

The Obama alumni sprang into action. Fifty-one of them signed an open letter saying, in so many words, that the laptop was Russia-created disinformation — a letter that became, essentially, "Round River II."

The letter, of course, was wrong. An FBI field office had verified there was no hack and confirmed the computer belonged to Hunter Biden.

The laptop contained a rich assortment of porn, politics and foreign intrigue.

On the day Hunter Biden joined the Burisma board in May 2014, he received an email from corporate figure Vadym Pozharskyi. He told the younger Biden he wanted an end to Ukraine officials making this threat: cough up cash or we will start a criminal investigation.

“We urgently need your advice on how you could use your influence to convey a message/signal, etc. to stop what we consider to be politically motivated actions ...” Mr. Pozharskyi told Hunter Biden.

In 2015, Mr. Pozharskyi came to Washington and met with then-Vice President Biden, according to another email in which he thanked Hunter Biden for setting up the meeting.

The next year, Ukraine fired Prosecutor General Viktor Shokin.

Out of office, the elder Mr. Biden bragged in 2018 that he had gotten it done. He said he told Ukrainian officials he would withhold \$1 billion in aid if Mr. Shokin stayed.

“I looked at them and said: ‘I’m leaving in six hours. If the prosecutor is not fired, you’re not getting the money,’” Mr. Biden boasted. “Well, son of a bitch. He got fired.”

Hunter Biden told an associate in an email that he expected to collect nearly \$5 million from Burisma.

The actual FBI Round River was still at work batting down Biden allegations in late 2020. Here is how the declassified DNI memo describes the operation to produce a “Ukraine narrative.”

“The Round River team operated leading up to and through the 2020 U.S. presidential election. The team of analysts had administrative accesses to all reporting and drafted intelligence products that were later added to each CHS file to show the reporting was deemed Russian disinformation. The FITF-R team also provided defensive briefings to any congressional member who obtained reporting related to any aspect of the ‘Ukraine narrative.’” The FBI knocked down one allegation that seems obviously true. In December 2015, after Hunter Biden had taken a seat on the Burisma board, a source reported to the FBI that company head Mykola Zlochevsky is “using his relationship with Hunter Biden to get closer to the Americans.”

The FBI was wrong. Of course, Mr. Zlochevsky was using the Bidens. He asked Hunter Biden through aide Mr. Pozharskyi to head off an investigation into Burisma. Hunter Biden arranged for Mr. Pozharskyi to meet with his father when he visited Washington.

The Trump White House also released FBI spreadsheets of who Round River considered “conduits” and who were “targets.”

Conduits included Attorney General William Barr, Mr. Pompeo, Sen. Ron Johnson, now-House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan and Mr. Nunes, who did groundbreaking work on exposing the dossier as a hoax.

Targets included the two Bidens, Mr. Obama, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the Clinton Foundation, former Secretary of State John Kerry and George Soros, the billionaire hedge fund owner who finances left-wing activists.

Ironically, one of the listed conduits is journalist John Solomon, a former Washington Times editor, then identified as being with The Hill newspaper, who wrote about alleged Biden corruption in Ukraine.

He went on to found Just the News as its editor-in-chief in 2020. He took a leave of absence this year to become unpaid chairman of the White House Government Transparency Task Force. It has been releasing once-secret government documents, such as information on Round River.