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**From:** Hadas Gold - POLITICO Media  
**Sent:** Mon 7/10/2017 10:10:20 AM  
**Subject:** Morning Media: Sinclair triples down on Boris — Russian Runaround — Newspapers team up to take on Google, Facebook

By Hadas Gold | 07/10/2017 06:07 AM EDT

*With Alex Weprin*

**SINCLAIR TRIPLES DOWN ON BORIS EPSHTEYN:** Sinclair Broadcasting chief political analyst and former Trump White House official Boris Epshteyn (whose short tenure was marked by his combative and controversial style ) will now appear on Sinclair stations across the country nine times per week for his "Bottom Line with Boris" segments, the company confirms. The segments, which currently run three times per week on the stations, will now feature a mix of his political commentary as well as 'interviews' with members of Congress and other people. The segments will have a "billboard," meaning they're sponsored, but they're not sponsored content. Epshteyn's segments are "must runs" so all the Sinclair stations across the country will air them along with their other "must run" segments like conservative commentary from Mark Hyman and the "Terrorism Alert Desk" segments. Sinclair is in the midst of a major expansion as it pursues its acquisition of the Tribune Media local stations.

**Speaking of those must runs** I've got Sinclair's first official reaction to comedian John Oliver, who skewered Sinclair on his HBO show last week for forcing its stations to air the segments nationwide:

"While we appreciate John Oliver's unique brand of humor, we stand by our approach to sharing content among our stations to supplement the excellent work our newsroom staffs do every day in service to their local communities."

**And speaking of John Oliver**, over the weekend Sinclair released an Epshteyn "must run" segment where he responded to Oliver's critiques of their "Terrorism Alert Desk," (Hyman also had his own segment responding to Oliver.) "The bottom line is that Sinclair strives to keep its viewers informed as well as protected, and it is vital that viewers do not stick their heads in the sand and are aware of the threat facing each and every one of us," Epshteyn said.

**Good morning everyone and welcome to Morning Media** with me, Hadas Gold! I'm thrilled and honored to be here. I, along with my esteemed colleagues, will bring you the most important news where media meets politics. We'll have scoopy tidbits, the must reads around the beat and things to look out for. This newsletter is nothing without you, dear readers, and throughout the next few weeks as I take on this project and make my own tweaks to it, I need your help! Email me with your news tips and suggestions for how you want to experience this newsletter. I want to hear it all - the good, the bad and the incredibly flattering: [hgold@politico.com](mailto:hgold@politico.com) / [@Hadas Gold](mailto:@HadasGold). **Morning Media** is edited by **Alex Weprin** ([@alexweprin](mailto:@alexweprin) / [aweprin@politico.com](mailto:aweprin@politico.com)) and produced with writing/reporting help from **Cristiano Lima**. ([clima@politico.com](mailto:clima@politico.com) / [@ludacristiano](mailto:@ludacristiano)). Archives. Subscribe.

**RUSSIAN RUNAROUND:** President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin finally had their big face to face meeting on Friday during the G-20 in Hamburg. But reports on what was said in that meeting have been disjointed, with the Russians and our own government giving slightly differing accounts. For example: Secretary of State Rex Tillerson told reporters in an audio-only briefing afterward that Trump told Putin that members of Congress were pushing for additional sanctions against Russia over the election issue.

**But wait, there are tweets.** In one of his signature tweetstorms Trump claimed "sanctions were not discussed at my meeting with President Putin. Nothing will be done until the Ukrainian & Syrian problems are solved!"

**What could help clear this up? A press conference** by the president. But Trump eschewed the traditional presidential press conference at the G-20, instead sending off his usual stream of tweets. Trump has not held a free form press conference (i.e. not in a bilat situation with another foreign leader) in nearly five months. We'll find out in a couple hours whether the White House will have an on-camera briefing today.

**MEANWHILE, THE NEWSPAPER SCOOP WARS CONTINUE.** This time the point goes to The New York Times, which had readers riveted over the weekend as it first reported on Saturday that the president's son, Donald Trump Jr. met with a Russian lawyer who has deep ties to the Kremlin during the campaign. On Sunday the Times team added an even bigger bombshell: That lawyer promised damaging information on Hillary Clinton as pretext for the meeting. Trump Jr.'s explanations of the meetings also changed from Saturday to Sunday, leading to a devastating front page for Trump's eldest son.

**The Washington Post got in on the game too,** revealing that the acquaintance who introduced Trump Jr. to the Russian lawyer is Rob Goldstone, a music publicist and manager to a Russian popstar and son of a wealthy Moscow developer.

**NEWSPAPERS TEAM UP TO NEGOTIATE DIRECTLY WITH GOOGLE AND FACEBOOK:** Via Jim Rutenberg's Monday mediator column in the Times: "This week, a group of news organizations will begin an effort to win the right to negotiate collectively with the big online platforms and will ask for a limited antitrust exemption from Congress in order to do so. It's an extreme measure with long odds. But the industry considers it worth a shot, given its view that Google and Facebook, regardless of their intentions, are posing a bigger threat economically than President Trump is (so far) with his rhetoric."

**The Newspaper Alliance is leading the effort,** which has buy-in from a wide array of papers, from the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and Washington Post to the Star Tribune of Minneapolis and more.

**DESPITE THE INTERNAL TURMOIL, FOX NEWS IS STILL DOMINATING THE RATINGS** and even saving money to boot. Tucker Carlson may have slightly fewer overall viewers than predecessor Bill O'Reilly, but he pulls in more viewers in the demo that advertisers covet and is less expensive for Fox than O'Reilly's extra-large \$25 million a year contract, Joe Flint at the Wall street Journal reports. Same goes for panel show "The Five," which is cheaper

to produce at 9 p.m. than Megyn Kelly's old show.

**Of note:** Fox News is full steam ahead on its programming and tone. Despite fears internally that the younger Murdoch sons could try to change the Fox brand (particularly the pro-Trump opinion shows), Carlson told Flint that James and Lachlan are hands off.

**JIM ACOSTA: GRANDSTANDER OR TRUTH TELLER?** That's the question The Washington Post's Paul Farhi asks about CNN's White House correspondent whose remarks (and tweets) about the White House "aren't just blunt; they're unusual. Reporters are supposed to report, not opine. Yet Acosta's disdain has flowed openly..." Acosta told Farhi he's just "covering a story, honestly," and asking tough and hard questions in the face of a President who assails the free press.

**White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer** had a different take, saying "he's gone well beyond the role of reporter and steered into the role of advocate" and if he "were a mainstream, veteran reporter, I'd be advocating for him to knock it off. It's hurting the profession."

**Farhi notes that Acosta was also often jostled with former President Barack Obama** and his press team, even landing himself as a highlight in conservative media accounts and in Republican National Committee emails. But Farhi says Acosta's actions aren't uniting the White House press corps behind him - he's getting "relatively tepid support" from his fellow White House scribes. Read the full thing [here](#).

**SOUNDBITE:** "If I work for President Trump and his campaign and I thought the Russians have information that would expose Hillary for being a liar, and I said 'could you release that,' is that a crime?" [[Sean Hannity](#) last month]

**JOSH GREEN IS OUT WITH ANOTHER EXCERPT OF HIS STEVE BANNON BOOK,** this time in New York magazine. A few of the juicy tidbits:

-- Rupert Murdoch dismissed the idea of Donald Trump running for president when Ivanka Trump had lunch with him ahead of the launch to give him a heads up. That slight bugged Trump for months.

-- Ann Coulter helped write a white paper on Trump's immigration policies during the campaign, then praised it without divulging she helped write it.

-- Breitbart was gleefully posting anti-Megyn Kelly articles during the height of the Trump/Fox News fight (remember when?), leading to former Fox News chief Roger Ailes dispatching his personal lawyer, Peter Johnson Jr., to the Breitbart embassy in D.C. to tell Bannon to drop his attacks on Kelly, threatening that Bannon would never be on Fox again if he didn't call off the Breitbart attack dogs. Bannon warned Johnson Kelly would "turn on [Ailes] one day."

Read the full piece [here](#).

**TIL:** A total solar eclipse is [coming to parts of the U.S.](#) on August 21, a once in a lifetime

opportunity. Some hotels in my husband's hometown of Kansas City are double their normal price and other small towns across the country are suddenly the most popular places to be.

**EXTRAS:**

- AT&T's blockbuster deal for Time Warner hangs in limbo [[New York Times](#)]
- The New York Times has responded to Sarah Palin's defamation lawsuit [[New York Post](#)]
- What Russian journalists think of American reporters covering Putin and Trump [[New Yorker](#)]
- An Australian reporter is getting attention for his Trump takedown at the G-20 [[Mediaite](#)]
- WikiLeaks proposes Julian Assange lead a U.S.-Russian cyber security unit [[WikiLeaks](#)]
- The Baltimore Sun is shutting down the Baltimore City Paper [[Baltimore Business Journal](#)]
- D.C. Metro removed ads for Milo Yiannopoulos' book after complaints [[DCist](#)]
- The POLITICO Playbook authors are writing a book [[Vanity Fair](#)]

**KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR: Gov. Chris Christie is testing his chops today as a radio host,** kicking off two days of auditions for the afternoon drive hosting slot on New York sports-talk station WFAN 660-AM. It's part of what is said to be a test-run to replace longtime WFAN host Mike Francesa.

**ELSEWHERE, PERHAPS:**

- How Gotham Gave Us Trump [[POLITICO](#)]
- The Secret Lives of Senators [[New York Times](#)]

*To view online:*

<http://www.politico.com/media/tipsheets/morning-media/2017/07/10/sinclair-triples-down-on-boris-russian-runaround-newspapers-team-up-to-take-on-google-facebook-001306>

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