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From: Joe Pompeo - POLITICO Media
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Subject: Morning Media: WSJ's Trump-Russia talker — The case against the CNN firings — Cold water on Heat Street

By Joe Pompeo | 06/30/2017 05:51 AM EDT

With Cristiano Lima and Alex Weprin

DRIP, DRIP... As I [documented in a big feature a couple weeks ago](#), The New York Times and The Washington Post have been at the forefront of the head-turning newsbreaks regarding investigations into whether Team Trump colluded with Russia in the 2016 election. Last night, however, it was neither the Times nor the Post, but rather The Wall Street Journal that was turning heads with a [big Twitter talker about the potential Trump-Russia connection](#):

Before the 2016 presidential election, a longtime Republican opposition researcher mounted an independent campaign to obtain emails he believed were stolen from Hillary Clinton's private server, likely by Russian hackers.

In conversations with members of his circle and with others he tried to recruit to help him, the GOP operative, Peter W. Smith, implied he was working with retired Lt. Gen. Mike Flynn, at the time a senior adviser to then-candidate Donald Trump.

[...]

Emails written by Mr. Smith and one of his associates show that his small group considered Mr. Flynn and his consulting company, Flynn Intel Group, to be allies in their quest.

What role, if any, Mr. Flynn may have played in Mr. Smith's project is unclear. In an interview with The Wall Street Journal, Mr. Smith said he knew Mr. Flynn, but he never stated that Mr. Flynn was involved.

Oh by the way: "Mr. Smith died at age 81 on May 14, which was about 10 days after the Journal interviewed him. His account of the email search is believed to be his only public comment on it."

Josh Marshall: "The Journal piece raises far more questions than it answers. ... Why did Smith talk to the Journal? ... why is the story appearing almost two months after the interview? ... if Russia had some angle with Trump, why would they operate through this rando? ... how did smith die? To be clear, these are not questions that raise doubts about the article. There [sic] just a few of the questions the article raises and which the article doesn't explicitly address."

Chris Hayes: "A very big deal: First reported evidence of *actual* attempts at collusion with Russian hackers by Trump allies." **Susan Hennessy:** "This is actually a very big deal. It's the first concrete allegation of Trump team collusion."

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PROGRAMMING NOTE - We'll be back on Wednesday, July 5. Have a nice long weekend and enjoy the fireworks.

YOU'LL WANNA TUNE INTO 'MORNING JOE' - [According to Page Six](#): "The hosts ... delayed their vacation plans so they can return to the air ... and fire back at President Trump's Twitter attack. 'Joe and Mika were supposed to start their July 4th weekend early by taking Friday off -- but following Trump's tweet, they postponed their trip by [a] day so they can be back on air Friday morning to sling some 'bad blood' back at Trump,' an MSNBC source told The Post."

WAS GRETA VAN SUSTEREN BLINDSIDED? Based on how her MSNBC firing unfolded yesterday, it would *seem* that way? Her husband/agent [told CNN](#) she'd found out earlier in the day, and he [added to the Times](#), "We're in kind of shock." Precisely one minute after Vanity Fair [broke the news](#) at 3:48 p.m., Van Susteren [tweeted](#) at 3:49, "I am out at MSNBC." An MSNBC executive [told our own Hadas Gold](#) that the split was "amicable," saying the network had tried to boost the 6 p.m. show Van Susteren kicked off in January following her exit from Fox News, but that the numbers "weren't there." Van Susteren's loss is Ari Melber's gain: The 30-something up-and-comer will now cut a bigger figure at MSNBC as her replacement.

MEANWHILE, AT CBS NEWS - President David Rhodes acknowledged during a staff meeting yesterday morning that the messy handling of Scott Pelley's "Evening News" ouster hurt the network. "I'm concerned about it," he said, [according to CBS source who dished to Jeremy Barr of The Hollywood Reporter](#). "Transitions are difficult. We've had some very smooth ones while I've been here, and this one wasn't one of the smoothest. And I'm concerned about that. It didn't go the way that I wanted it to go."

MUST READS:

-- "The Future Of Coal Country" [[The New Yorker](#)]

-- "Present at the Destruction: How Rex Tillerson Is Wrecking the State Department" [[POLITICO Mag](#)]

-- "The Devil's Henchmen" [[The Atavist](#)]

-- "The Tiny Satellites Ushering in the New Space Revolution" [[Bloomberg Businessweek](#)]

-- "Game of Thrones: How They Make the World's Most Popular Show" [[Time](#)]

THE SIDE OF BRET STEPHENS NYT READERS CAN GET DOWN WITH - "Of those from whom little is expected, much is forgiven. And of those from whom much is expected, little is forgiven. Such are the standards by which Donald Trump's deliberate assaults on the news

media need to be understood and feared. ... [I]t was a mistake of CNN to let the three journalists ... responsible for the Scaramucci story go. The political success of Trump's assault on the press depends on his conflation of mistakes with dishonesty, of fallibility with fakery. ... [T]he news media ought to take care not to underestimate the threat it faces from this White House. We have set ourselves up as guardians of Truth ... On the other side is a president who believes in none of this ... How do you shame the shameless? You can't. But you can at least deny him the right to shame you." More: "[The President Versus 'Fake News,' Again](#)"

Similar sentiment from Jack Shafer: "In hindsight, it's easy to say CNN shouldn't have gone with such a flimsy, improperly vetted story. Unfortunately, journalism isn't a hindsight business. Journalism happens in real time, against a deadline clock, and in a competitive atmosphere. Only ombudsmen, press critics and libel attorneys get to second-guess what they do. ... I must defend honest journalists who have screwed up (as I've screwed up). 'If you say you haven't screwed up, you're lying.'" More: "[Should Journalists Have the Right to Be Wrong?](#)"

FAREWELL, HEAT STREET. WE HARDLY KNEW YA! [BuzzFeed's Steven Perlberg](#) reported last night that the conservative digital news website owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. will cease to exist as a standalone publication come August, when it is to be folded into the financial web publication MarketWatch. The site was originally led by former British MP Louise Mensch, and News Corp. boasted about its early traffic gains. But Mensch left early this year -- ostensibly to work on a new project for News Corp (a company insider had told me months ago she was "interested in doing a soccer website" that would tie-in with a soccer-related News Corp. product abroad) -- and went on to become Twitter's most prolific Trump-Russia sleuth. Then earlier this month, Mensch's successor, Noah Kotch, left to run Fox News Digital over at News Corp's sister company. As [BuzzFeed reports](#), Murdoch "pushed" for Fox News to acquire Heat Street, but "Fox didn't want to take on the property, in part because Mensch's recent Twitter crusade. ... Ultimately, Heat Street was left twisting in the wind at News Corp." And, apparently, that was that.

SOUND BITES:

-- "This ... adds up to the most dangerous denigration of media since ... Nixon? Did Nixon attack six great news organizations by name in 24 hours?" [[Mike Allen](#)]

-- "Sarah Huckabee Sanders, um, I wonder if she knows what she's saying when she says something of the things that she says." [[Katy Tur](#)]

-- "You have sat here and talked about your family from this podium, are you going to tell your kids this behavior is okay?" [[Hallie Jackson](#)]

-- "RT if a copy editor has saved you from a mortifying error. Like if you're you're a copy editor and you've got a better way to phrase this." [[Rebecca Keegan](#)]

A FAKE NEWS BUTTON FOR TWITTER? [via WaPo](#): "Twitter is exploring adding a feature that would let users flag tweets that contain misleading, false or harmful information, according to two people familiar with the company's projects. The feature, which is still in a

prototype phase and may never be released, is part of the company's uphill battle against rampant abuse on its platform. It could look like a tiny tab appearing in a drop-down menu alongside tweets, according to the people, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release details of the effort."

REVOLVING DOOR: HuffPost named a new editor in chief for its U.K. edition yesterday. Per the announced, Polly Curtis "will be responsible for all editorial output and standards, overseeing a team of editors and staff writers as well as the UK site's blog platform. ... Polly joins HuffPost from the British Red Cross where she was Director of Media ... Previously, Polly held a number of positions at Guardian News and Media including Digital Editor."

SOUNDTRACK: Roxy Music, "Love is the Drug"

EXTRAS:

-- The "long and ugly history" of Donald Trump's relationship with Joe and Mika. [[WaPo](#)]

-- Scenes from yesterday's copy-editor walkout at The New York Times. [[HuffPost](#)]

-- "MTV News: The Good, the Bad, and the Contradictions of an Ill-Fated Experiment" [[Spin](#)]

To view online:

<http://www.politico.com/media/tipsheets/morning-media/2017/06/30/wsjs-trump-russia-talker-the-case-against-the-cnn-firings-cold-water-on-heat-street-001302>

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