

AT SAME TIME AS DNC HACK RELEASED, FUNNY ALLEGED HACKS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

You've probably heard that hackers, probably Russian, hacked the DNC and released a bunch of information, including a really crappy oppo research report on Donald Trump. See this post for some of the materials and this analysis of the materials (including metadata to support the case these are Russians).

Given that development, I'm even more interesting in this development than I already was. Several websites in the Middle East – in this case Jordan's Petra news service – posted a report that Mohammed bin Salman, the third ranking Saudi royal, had claimed to have provided Hillary 20% of her campaign funding.

On Sunday a report appeared on the Petra News Agency website that included what were described as exclusive comments from Saudi Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The comments included a claim that Riyadh has provided 20 percent of the total funding to the prospective Democratic candidate's campaign.

I'm particularly interested in how that report got disclaimed: with intervention by the Podesta Group, which is both a lobbying arm for the Saudis and the firm of Hillary's campaign manager.

On Monday a spokesperson for American public relations firm the Podesta Group contacted MEE to say that they work with the Saudi Royal Court and to request a correction to our earlier story that said the Jordanian news agency had deleted the quotes from Prince Mohammed.

Senior global communications specialist Will Bohlen – who, prior to joining Podesta, was chief researcher for a best-selling history of Bill Clinton’s presidency – sent a link to a clarification issued by the Petra News Agency which said it was “totally false and untrue” that they had published then deleted the quotes from Prince Mohammed about funding the Clinton campaign.

“A technical failure on Petra ’s website occurred for a few minutes on Sunday evening, 12 June 2016,” the Jordanian news agency said. “Protection systems at the agency as well as the technical department noticed that and therefore, they suspended the transmission system and the electronic site and moved to the alternative website.

“Later, it became clear that the technical failure that occurred was an attempt to hack the agency’s transmission system and its website. The agency was surprised to see some media outlets as well as the social media publishing false news that were attributed to Petra. They said that Petra transmitted a news item related to the deputy crown prince of Saudi Arabia and later deleted this news item. This is totally false and untrue.”

For now, I will assume this was a hack, which (again) I find to coincide interestingly with the DNC hack. The Clinton Foundation does get far too much money from the Saudis, but we can review Hillary’s actual funding to be sure that Mo bin Salman is not funding her *campaign* directly.

In entirely unrelated news I’ll put here anyway, the big Saudi investor Alwaleed bin Talal is now Twitter’s second largest investor.

Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Bin Abdulaziz

Al Saud, who in 2011 invested \$300 million in the social network, now owns 34.9 million shares of Twitter's common stock, according to a new regulatory filing (pdf).

At nearly 5.2%, his stake in the company is now larger than that of Jack Dorsey, Twitter's co-founder and newly re-minted CEO, whose 21.86 million shares give him 3.2% of the company, according to FactSet. (The prince previously had a stake of roughly 3%.)

Particularly given that Twitter isn't exactly a great investment, I find Alwaleed's interest in it notable.