

IS THERE MORE TO TRUMP'S THUMBS UP PICTURE?

Yesterday, Trump tweeted out this bizarre picture, featuring him, Hope Hicks, Jared Kushner, Stephen Miller, Dan Scavino, and either Staff Secretary John Porter or Body Man John McEntee, all giving a thumbs up.



It appears to be a celebration of the one year anniversary of his win, though in the wake of the shellacking the GOP took in VA and his disavowal of Ed Gillespie seems like denial.

But given the inclusion of Jared – fresh off his 4AM chats with Mohammed bin Salman that immediately preceded MBS' purge (Jared apparently joined the trip late, and some White House reporters didn't even know he was on it) – and the fact it was taken (given Hicks and Trump's garb) a day before it was posted makes me wonder whether the tweet is not serving a dual purpose, signaling for the second time this week that Trump supports MBS' plans in the Middle East.



Donald J. Trump 
@realDonaldTrump

I have great confidence in King Salman
and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia,
they know exactly what they are doing....

6:03pm · 6 Nov 2017 · Twitter for iPhone

As John de Vashon noted on Twitter, the picture also foregrounds the FT coverage of MBS' purge, from a newspaper even more dated than the clothing.



As I've noted of late, MBS' purge is consistent with what I imagined, back in May, a Jared Kushner-brokered "peace" deal would look like – basically a reordering of the Middle East at the behest of Israel and Saudi Arabia.

[C]onsider what the purported Middle East peace that Kushner has reportedly been crafting would actually look like. It'd include unlimited support for Israeli occupation of Palestine. Bashar al-Assad would be ousted, but in a way that would permit Russia a strategic footprint, perhaps with sanction of its occupation of Crimea and Donetsk as well. It'd sanction the increasing authoritarianism in Turkey. It's sanction Saudi Arabia's ruthless starvation of Yemen. It'd fuck over the Kurds.

And it'd mean war with Iran.

Trump took steps towards doing most of those things on his trip, not least with his insane weapons deal with Saudi Arabia, itself premised on a formal detachment of weapons sales from any demands for respect for human rights. Of particular note, Trump claimed to be establishing a great peace initiative with Islamic countries, even when discussing meetings that treated Iran (and by association most Shia Muslims) as an enemy.

Several days ago in Saudi Arabia, I met with the leaders of the Muslim world and Arab nations from all across the region. It was an epic gathering. It was an historic event. King Salman of Saudi Arabia could not have been kinder, and I will tell you, he's a very wise, wise man. I called on these leaders and asked them to join in a partnership to drive terrorism from their midst, once and for all. It was a deeply productive meeting. People have said there had really never been anything even close in history. I believe that. Being there and seeing who was there and hearing the spirit and a lot of love, there has never been anything like that in history. And it was an honor to be involved.

Kushner's "peace plan" is not so much a plan for peace. It's a plan for a complete remapping of the Middle East according to a vision the Israelis and Saudis have long been espousing (and note the multiple nods on Trump's trip to the growing alliance between the two, including Trump's flight directly from

Riyadh to Tel Aviv and Bibi's comment on "common dangers are turning former enemies into partners"). It's a vision for still more oppression (a view that Trump supports globally, in any case).

Yes, it'd probably all be accomplished with corrupt self-enrichment on the part of all players.

Just before the purge, Saad Hariri resigned and is believed to be held in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has claimed the curiously timed missile striking Riyadh signaled Iran was in Yemen. Now, Saudi Arabia is ordering its citizens out of Lebanon immediately, suggesting there may be some kind of response now that they've pulled Hariri out of Lebanon.

In other words, it feels like MBS, while consolidating power and seizing his opponents' considerable assets, is about to expand his war in the Middle East.

And conveniently, Trump and Putin will meet on Friday to lay out plans (reportedly including on Syria).

I've said for some time that whatever merit there is to the Russian investigation, it risked focusing too closely on just Russia, and not Trump's other corrupt ties. Jared's plans (and his claims about the scope of his meetings with other Ambassadors) were always far broader than just Israel.

And no one in Trump's orbit have the sophistication to understand if they're being snookered by the Saudis and Israelis.

So I wonder whether this picture isn't designed to do far more than gloat about the election.