

THE DON JR - WIKILEAKS EMAILS ARE UNDERWHELMING

Julia Ioffe has a big scoop on the content of DMs between Don Jr and WikiLeaks turned over to Congress (unless it came indirectly from Don Jr, as it may have, it's another inappropriate leak that will discredit whatever source turned them over).

And I have to say, the DMs are more telling for what they don't include than what they do. Most notably, Ioffe cites no DM showing Julian Assange explaining to Don Jr that his source wasn't Russia, which given more recent efforts to pitch that story, you might have expected.

Just as notable, when Don Jr asks Assange what emails will be coming out the week of October 7 – one of the moments when, Democrats have speculated, some coordination between Wikileaks and the Trump campaign may have occurred – Assange doesn't answer.

On October 3, 2016, Wikileaks wrote again. "Hiya, it'd be great if you guys could comment on/push this story," Wikileaks suggested, attaching a quote from then-Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton about wanting to "just drone" Wikileaks founder, Julian Assange.

"Already did that earlier today," Trump Jr. responded an hour-and-a-half later. "It's amazing what she can get away with."

Two minutes later, Trump Jr. wrote again, asking, "What's behind this Wednesday leak I keep reading about?" The day before, Roger Stone, an informal advisor to Donald Trump, had tweeted, "Wednesday@HillaryClinton is done. #Wikileaks."

Wikileaks didn't respond to that message, but on October 12, 2016, the account again messaged Trump Jr. "Hey Donald, great to see you and your dad talking about our publications," Wikileaks wrote. (At a rally on October 10, Donald Trump had proclaimed, "I love Wikileaks!")

The exchange is interesting for a number of reasons: given my questions about uncertainty over whether these would be Clinton Foundation emails or something else, there's no discussion from either side about content. Don Jr seems to have gone to Assange rather than Roger Stone to find out about the impending dump. And there's no talk about other impending dumps – not the Access Hollywood tape, not the Intelligence Community report blaming Russian for the hack.

All in all more exonerating than inculcating, particularly given the expectations around that week.

The other thing that doesn't appear in these DMs is any hint that Don Jr knew of Peter Smith's efforts to find and send to Wikileaks hacked copies of emails from Hillary's server.

It is definitely the case that Assange was trying to gain some value from Trump, but Don Jr, at least, didn't comply (indeed, as Ioffe notes, with just a few exceptions Don Jr didn't respond). But (unless Don Jr withheld DMs that Twitter would have already turned over to Mueller) this in no way backs the narrative that Democrats suggested might have happened.

Here are the DMs Ioffe describes:

September 20: Wikileaks warns about PutinTrump (Don Jr promises to ask around, and emailed four people on the campaign telling them WikiLeaks had made contact)

October 3: Wikileaks asks for pushback on Hillary's threat to drone Wikileaks (Don Jr says he had already done so)

October 3: Don Jr asks about the impending dump
(Wikileaks doesn't respond)

October 7: IC statement tying Wikileaks to the
Russian operation

October 12: Wikileaks thanks Don Jr for his dad
talking up Wikileaks, provides a preferred link
(Don Jr tweets out the link two days
later); Shortly after the original tweet, Don Sr
tweeted out praise for Wikileaks, but didn't use
the link Assange wanted him to use. [Update:
Some caution is due on this last point. While it
indeed looks like Don Sr's tweet closely follows
the exchange, the DMs we have are printouts,
meaning we can't check the actual timestamps of
the exchanges to verify what time zone they were
set to.]

October 21: Wikileaks asks for a tax return to
publish, trying to establish impartiality

November 8: Wikileaks suggests Trump not concede
and challenge media corruption

November 9: Wikileaks tweets "wow"

December 16: Assange asks to be appointed
Australian Ambassador to DC

July 11: Wikileaks offers to publish Don Jr's
Veselnitskaya email (Don Jr posts them himself)