

Julian Assange Says Russian Government Not Source of WikiLeaks E-mails



London, January 5 (RHC)-- E-mails from Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman did not come from Russian hackers and the claim is being made to "delegitimize" Donald Trump, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange told Fox News' Sean Hannity in an exclusive interview.

Hannity sat down with Assange in London's Ecuadorian embassy, where the Australian native has been holed up for five years battling extradition to Sweden on unrelated charges. During the interview, Assange was adamant that the hacked e-mails his organization released of Clinton official John Podesta did not come from Russia, as the Obama administration has claimed.

"We can say, we have said, repeatedly that over the last two months that our source is not the Russian government and it is not a state party," Assange said. More than 50,000 e-mails were released during the 2016 presidential campaign, exposing dubious practices at the Clinton Foundation, top journalists working closely with the Clinton campaign, key Clinton aides speaking derisively of Catholics and a top Democratic National Committee official providing debate questions to Clinton in advance.

Hannity told Fox News' Bill Hemmer "I believe everything (Assange) said," and praised the Internet activist for his commitment to government transparency. Despite the Obama administration's claims that Russia was behind cyber-intrusions meant to interfere with the U.S. election -- and punitive measures taken against Moscow last week -- Assange said no one associated with the Russian government gave his group the files.

Assange also noted that in recent statements from top administration offices including the FBI and White House, "the word WikiLeaks" was missing, even as the administration expelled Russian diplomats in retaliation for cyberattacks. He said that was "very strange."

Some Republican critics have questioned what evidence the administration has to back up its Russia allegations, while others have applauded President Obama for moving to penalize Russia -- albeit months after the initial hacks.

Asked if he thought Obama was lying to the American people about Russia's actions, Assange said the president is "acting like a lawyer" with his allegations. "If you look at most of his statements, he doesn't say that. He doesn't say that WikiLeaks obtained its information from Russia or worked with Russia," Assange said.

But he said he believes the administration is "trying to delegitimize the Trump administration as it goes into the White House. They are trying to say that President-elect Trump is not a legitimate president."

Since Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton in November, Clinton's allies have stepped up claims that the WikiLeaks e-mail releases significantly damaged her candidacy -- particularly the leak of thousands of e-mails from Campaign Chairman John Podesta's account. An earlier release of DNC emails over the summer led to the resignation of Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz.

Asked if the e-mails changed the outcome of the election, Assange said: "Who knows, it's impossible to tell. But if it did, the accusation is that the true statements of Hillary Clinton and her campaign manager, John Podesta, and the DNC head Debbie Wasserman Schultz, their true statements is what changed the election."

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