

## **CNN, NBC, Fox personalities slam Trump over performance at Putin press conference**

**BY EMILY BIRNBAUM AND BRETT SAMUELS**

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[President Trump](#) on Monday drew critical reviews from media analysts and pundits across the political spectrum for his performance during a joint press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Trump [did not press or condemn Putin](#) on the allegations of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential race, just days after indictments were delivered against 12 Russian intelligence officers for their alleged role in the hacking of the Democratic National Committee.

Instead, he asserted that he did not collude with Russia in the election, recounted his victory over Democratic nominee [Hillary Clinton](#) and called special counsel [Robert Mueller](#)'s investigation "ridiculous" and a source of tension between the two countries.

Numerous analysts and reporters on CNN, which Trump has long targeted with insults and taunts, tore into Trump's performance.

Anderson Cooper, who anchored CNN's coverage from Helsinki, Finland, before and after the press conference, declared it "perhaps one of the most disgraceful performances by an American president at a summit in front of a Russian leader that I have ever seen."

John King, a network anchor, labeled the meeting the "surrender summit."

David Gergen, a former adviser in the Nixon, Ford, Reagan and Clinton administrations, called it "embarrassing" for Trump to bring up Hillary Clinton's emails and the 2016 election on the international stage.

"I've never heard an American president talk that way, but I think it's especially true that when he's with someone like Putin — who is a thug, a world-class thug — that he sides with him again and again against his own country's interests," Gergen said.

NBC's Chuck Todd, whom Trump has individually targeted with insults in the past, said Putin had "outmaneuvered" the U.S.

"Today's performance will be seen by some as circumstantial evidence," Todd added.

Meghan McCain, a host on ABC's "The View" and the daughter of Sen. [John McCain](#)(R-Ariz.), tweeted that she was "horrified" by the scene that played out.

"I don't have anything quippy to tweet. I'm horrified — and have never been more proud of the fact that Putin hates my father so much he personally sanctioned him on Russia's enemies list," she said.

Fox News, which is normally friendlier territory for the president, was also largely critical of Trump's performance.

Bret Baier called the press conference "surreal."

Fox News analyst Brit Hume called Trump's reference to the probe into Clinton's private email server to deflect questions about Russian interference a "lame response, to say the least."

Fox Business Network's Neil Cavuto laid into Trump, calling it "disgusting" that the president did not confront Putin.

"It's not a right or left thing. It's just wrong," Cavuto said, adding that Trump failed to offer "even a mild criticism."

Guy Benson, a Fox News contributor, called it "easily one of [Trump's] worst days as president."

Ari Fleischer, a former aide in the George W. Bush administration and a Fox News contributor, said Trump's acceptance of Putin's denials gives him a better understanding for why Democrats "think Putin must have the goods on him."

"Something tells me Trump's easy acceptance of Putin's POV will send his critics into an even higher state of hysterics," Fleischer tweeted. "Trump's supporters will not be moved. And the few people left in the middle like me think he should have been tougher on Putin, but we'll wait for Mueller."

Trump is scheduled to sit down for interview with Fox News hosts Sean Hannity and Tucker Carlson before departing Helsinki for Washington, D.C.

Both men are staunch supporters of the president, and Hannity reportedly speaks often with Trump. Hannity's interview will air on Monday night, while Carlson's will air Tuesday night.

Putin on Monday denied that his country interfered in the 2016 election during his talks with Trump and said he wanted Trump to win because he spoke of improving relations between the two countries.

While the U.S. intelligence community has previously determined that Russia interfered with the presidential election, Trump declined to back that conclusion.

"My people came to me, [Director of National Intelligence] [Dan Coats](#) and some others, they said they think it's Russia," Trump said. "I have President Putin, he just said it's not Russia. I will say this, I don't see any reason why it would be."

"But I have confidence in both parties," he added.