

Trump sits down with tech execs, including critics (Update)

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Donald Trump met Wednesday with some of America's most powerful tech executives in a bid to mend fences with a largely pro-Hillary Clinton industry and promote job creation and trade.

The afternoon summit at Trump Tower in New York gathered some of the wealthiest and brightest brains in the tech industry around the same table as the incoming billionaire Republican president after a bruising election campaign that revealed a bitterly divided country.

Five weeks before the 70-year-old property tycoon is scheduled to take office as head of the world's most powerful democracy, the participants discussed improving America's cybersecurity, repatriating US profits stashed overseas and market access with China, among other topics, according to the Trump transition team.

The meeting came as leading senators voice concern about Trump's pick of ExxonMobil chief executive Rex Tillerson as secretary of state and the oilman's ties to Moscow. The CIA said that Russian hackers interfered to help sway the November 8 election in his favor.

It was hostile territory for Trump by meeting Silicon Valley titans who—with the notable exception of PayPal co-founder and Trump supporter Peter Thiel—threw their weight behind his Democratic rival Clinton during the campaign.

"I'm here to help you folks do well," Trump told the executives in

opening remarks that reporters were briefly allowed to observe.

"We want you to keep going with the incredible innovation. There's nobody like you in the world," he said.

Trump and Vice President-elect Mike Pence sat side-by-side in the middle of the table surrounded by CEOs that included Tim Cook of Apple, Satya Nadella of Microsoft and Larry Page of Alphabet (Google).

The executives attending also included Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos, Tesla and SpaceX founder and CEO Elon Musk, Facebook's chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg and Oracle CEO Safra Catz.

Twitter absent

Trump's three eldest children—Don Jr, Ivanka and Eric—also attended as did Ivanka's husband Jared Kushner, and other key Trump staffers.

The most glaring absence was Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey—even more so given the president-elect's prolific use of the social network and its expanding list of 17.3 million followers.

Politico reported that Twitter was "bounced" from the meeting in retribution for refusing during the campaign to allow an emoji version of the hashtag #CrookedHillary.

But others have also been targets of the former reality television star's ire, including Bezos for allegedly using the newspaper he owns, The Washington Post, to secure tax benefits for Amazon—and to attack the Republican.

Bezos responded by cheekily offering Trump a trip into space—on a

rocket operated by his Blue Origin space flight company.

The president-elect suggested reconvening the tech leaders again in the future, perhaps as frequently as every quarter, according to a post-meeting statement from his transition team.

The tech titans who passed through the lobby of Trump Tower on their way out declined to answer shouted questions from reporters.

Late last month, a group of 17 tech associations offered to work with Trump while calling for policies to "foster growth and innovation."

Signaling the path forward, Trump told the tech leaders Wednesday that they could call him or his team. "We have no formal chain of command around here," he said.

Taxes and encryption

While the tech industry is likely to oppose any trade barriers or efforts to limit immigration, many companies are expected to welcome a lowering of corporate tax rates promised by Trump, especially on profits repatriated from overseas.

"We're going to make fair trade deals. We're going to make it a lot easier for you to trade across borders," Trump told the leaders.

"There's a lot of restrictions, a lot of problems that I think you see. And if you have any ideas on that, that would be great," he added.

Tech firms led by Apple are responsible for the lion's share of an estimated \$2.5 trillion being held overseas by US companies, which are reluctant to bring those funds back and face a hefty tax bill.

A potential clash between Trump and the sector is possible over encryption, and the ability of law enforcement and intelligence services to decrypt devices for national security investigations.

Trump said he would add Musk and Uber CEO Travis Kalanick to his advisory council of business leaders tasked with helping to create new jobs "across the United States from Silicon Valley to the heartland."

Trump was putting the finishing touches on his cabinet, nominating former Texas governor Rick Perry as energy secretary on Wednesday and reportedly choosing Montana Representative Ryan Zinke as interior secretary.

Perry, who was crushed by Trump in the Republican presidential primary race, once assailed him as a "cancer on conservatism."

On Wednesday, Forbes magazine ranked Trump as the second-most powerful person of the year—right behind Russian President Vladimir Putin.

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