

Univision chair, a Clinton donor, urged campaign to hit Trump on immigration

By [Matea Gold](#) and [Rosalind S. Helderman](#) October 10

Among the wealthy donors seeking to influence this year's presidential election, billionaire entertainment investor Haim Saban stands apart.

Not only have he and his wife lavished \$10 million on a pro-Hillary Clinton super PAC, but Saban is also majority owner and chairman of Univision, which runs the country's most-watched Spanish-language television network and reaches a large share of a key voting bloc.

So when Saban asked last year to speak to top campaign officials, shortly after Donald Trump had described Mexican immigrants as rapists and drug dealers in his presidential announcement speech, he immediately got their attention.

"Haim thinks we are under reacting to Trump/Hispanics," campaign chairman John Podesta wrote to top campaign aides after speaking with Saban, according to hacked emails posted by WikiLeaks. "Thinks we can get something by standing up for Latinos or attacking R's for not condemning."

The campaign's vice chair, Huma Abedin, wrote that Saban had called her, as well, concluding, "If Haim is raising it, it means he's hearing it from his Univision colleagues."

The emails reveal how a major donor had access to the highest levels of the Clinton campaign and was able to press top aides about an issue of major interest to his company. At the time, Trump's rhetoric on illegal immigration was garnering extensive coverage on Univision's news programs.

In a statement, Saban said he separates his roles of Clinton supporter and media owner.

"As an immigrant myself, I am appalled by Mr. Trump's disturbing, un-American and non-inclusive stance," said Saban, who grew up in Israel. "I've been a supporter of Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party long before my affiliation with Univision, and one thing has nothing to do with the other."

Daniel Coronell, president of Univision News, said Monday that Univision News is editorially independent from the parent company, Univision Communications.

“Mr. Saban has always respected that independence and has never tried to get involved or made any requests to our news division,” he said.

The messages from Saban were part of a cache of correspondence apparently obtained from Podesta’s private emails. U.S. intelligence officials have blamed previous hacks of political organizations on the Russian government, including stolen Democratic National Committee emails published over the summer by WikiLeaks. According to WikiLeaks’ Twitter feed, the organization released 2,086 emails Monday hacked from Podesta, adding to 2,050 that were released Friday.

The Clinton campaign has refused to authenticate individual emails, warning that Russian hackers have a history of doctoring stolen emails. Clinton seemed to confirm the legitimacy of the WikiLeaks documents in Sunday night’s debate when she answered a question about an email regarding her paid speeches.

In response for a request for comment about the Saban emails, Clinton campaign spokesman Glen Caplin noted that the Trump campaign was touting the release of the latest hack.

“It is absolutely disgraceful that the Trump campaign is cheering on a release today engineered by Vladimir Putin to interfere in this election,” Caplin said.

The emails show that Saban’s calls to Clinton officials spurred them into action.

“Haim is right — we should be jamming this all the time,” responded communications director Jennifer Palmieri, looping in her deputies. “Can we think about what else we should do? Issue a broader challenge?”

The staff then developed plans about how to push more aggressively on the issue of Trump’s remarks — including by possibly having Clinton do interviews on Univision television and radio, the emails show.

A month later, the former secretary of state sat down for an interview with Univision anchor Maria Elena Salinas.

In another exchange, Saban forwarded an email from Lionsgate Co-Chairman Rob Friedman, who had written the Univision chairman to praise a Democratic debate hosted by Univision and The Washington Post in March.

Friedman called the moderators “thoughtful, tough and incisive,” adding: “I thought it made Hilary appear direct and strong in her resolve. I felt it advanced our candidate. Thanks for Univision.”

Saban forwarded the note to Podesta and other top campaign officials, writing: “Ok. I like this one.”

But Saban also indicated in the emails that he took a hands-off approach to the network. In an Aug. 23, 2015, email to Abedin,

he noted that a story on a conservative blog described “Univision’s pro-Hillary boosterism.”

“I have nothing to do with it,” he wrote. “i NEVER tell our news dep. What to cover...,unlike some of my peers.”

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WikiLeaks has indicated that it holds more than 50,000 emails from Podesta, raising the possibility that releases may continue on a near-daily basis until Election Day.

Other emails released Monday show interoffice sniping among Clinton allies, including a 2011 email in which a key aide to former president Bill Clinton said daughter Chelsea Clinton was “acting like a spoiled brat kid.”

Another email shows Clinton’s staff dramatically understating the importance of the news that she had used a private email account while secretary of state, after the New York Times revealed the information in March 2015. Clinton’s aides discussed the possibility that she would appear on a panel moderated by comedian Larry Wilmore at a Clinton Global Initiative event and make a statement about the emails.

“It would be just light-hearted enough while giving her the opportunity to address this seriously, be a little conciliatory as discussed,” the aide wrote. “Goal would be to cauterize this just enough so it plays out over the weekend and dies in the short term.”

Clinton did not appear at the session, and her campaign continues to grapple with the email issue nearly 18 months later.

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