

How Obama and Hillary Clinton Weaponized the Trump-Russia Collusion ‘Dossier’

The disclosure that the Clinton campaign, using white-shoe law firm Perkins Coie as a cutout, financed the so-called Steele dossier confirms what we have known all along.

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The Trump-Russia collusion story was a joint invention of the Obama administration and the Clinton campaign. It enabled the Obama administration to make use of the nation's security and intelligence services to spy on Trump and his associates and to use whatever information they thereby gleaned to try to get Hillary into the White House. The failure of the scheme didn't stop either Obama or the Clintons.

Following the election debacle, an enraged Obama administration sought vengeance by disseminating the dossier as widely as possible with a view to undermining the incoming Trump administration and to ensuring that no rapprochement with Russia would be possible. In doing so, Obama and Clinton have thrown American politics into turmoil and have perhaps pushed the United States and Russia toward armed confrontation.

We have known the basic outlines of the Steele dossier story since January. The Steele dossier, we have been told, started off as a piece of opposition research prepared by Fusion GPS and financed by a Republican rival of Trump's or perhaps a GOP NeverTrumper. Following Trump's victory in the GOP primaries, the Democrats took over its funding. Fusion hired Christopher Steele, a former head of the Russia desk at MI6 who now ran his own corporate intelligence firm, Orbis Business Intelligence. Using the leads Steele had developed during his years at MI6, he reported back to his paymasters his shocking discovery: The Russians had been cultivating Trump for years in preparation for his run for the presidency. So shocked was Steele by this that he rushed to alert the FBI, MI6 and even select reporters.

Most of this story is pure fiction. Neither the GOP nor a primary rival of Trump's had any involvement with the dossier. To be sure, in October 2015, the Washington Free Beacon, a neo-conservative Web site funded by hedge fund billionaire Paul Singer, did hire Fusion to undertake opposition research on Trump. However, money for this undertaking dried up by May 2016.

The Steele-crafted Trump-Russia collusion story was from start to finish a Democratic Party operation. Its origins can be traced back to April 2016 and the leak of the Democratic National Committee e-mails. The DNC announced that it had been "hacked." However, instead of reporting the matter to the proper authorities, the DNC turned to attorney [Michael Sussmann](#), a partner at the Perkins Coie law firm. Sussmann got in touch with cybersecurity

firm CrowdStrike Inc. Now, CrowdStrike is no geeky, techno-gee-whiz firm. Its founder is Russian-born Dmitri Alperovitch, a senior fellow at the NATO-funded, intensely Russophobic Atlantic Council. “Within a day, CrowdStrike confirmed that the intrusion had originated in Russia,” the [New York Times](#) wrote. On June 14, CrowdStrike announced that the DNC hack perpetrators were two separate hacker groups employed by the Russian government.

Even though no one other than CrowdStrike had examined the DNC servers, U.S. intelligence agencies immediately declared that they were in agreement and that they had “[high confidence](#)” that the “Russian government was behind the [theft of emails and documents](#)” from the DNC.

It was at this moment that the Clinton people made the strategic decision to tie Trump to Putin and to make the centerpiece of its campaign the idea that a vote for Trump was a vote for the Kremlin. Perkins Coie—yet again—got in touch with Fusion, which, in turn, got in touch with Christopher Steele. Steele had contacts at MI6 and, perhaps more important, contacts at the FBI. He had allegedly [worked with the FBI](#) in the takedown of FIFA.

Steele, who had many contacts at the FBI, understood what was required of him. On June 20, six days after CrowdStrike’s announcement, he filed his first report. It was exactly what the Clinton campaign was looking for: lurid, unsubstantiated but nonetheless juicy allegations. Russia had supposedly been “cultivating, supporting and assisting Trump for at least 5 years.” Trump had had hired prostitutes to “perform a ‘golden showers’ show in front of him” at Moscow’s Ritz Carlton Hotel. “Trump’s unorthodox behavior in Russia over the years had provided the authorities...with enough embarrassing material...to be able to blackmail him.”

Steele’s first memo enticed the Clinton people and they eagerly turned on the money spigots. Steele followed up with a memo revealing that the Russians were behind the DNC leak, that Putin “hated and feared” Hillary Clinton and that there existed a “well-developed conspiracy of co-operation” between Trump and the Russians. The recently-indicted Paul Manafort, Trump’s campaign chairman at the time, managed this co-operation on behalf of Trump by using “foreign policy advisor” Carter Page as an intermediary. “In return the Trump team had agreed to sideline Russian intervention in Ukraine as a campaign issue and to raise U.S./NATO defense commitments in the Baltics and eastern Europe to deflect attention away from Ukraine.”

Carter Page, whom no one had ever heard of and who had never even met Trump, featured prominently in the Steele memos and in subsequent U.S. media coverage of the campaign. A July 19 memo from Steele had Page holding a “secret meeting” with Igor Sechin, executive chairman of Rosneft, the Russian state oil company, in which the two men discussed future bilateral energy cooperation and “an associated move to lift Ukraine-related” sanctions against Russia.

The Clinton campaign theme was set. By July 23, 2016, Clinton’s campaign manager, Robby Mook, [was telling](#) ABC News on Sunday that

“experts are telling us that Russian state actors broke in to the DNC, took all these emails and now are leaking them out through these Web sites. . . . It’s troubling that some experts are now telling us that this was done by the Russians for the purpose of helping Donald Trump.”

A couple of days later, Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), who was to lead the post-election “Trump-Russia collusion” charge in Congress, [declared](#):

Given Donald Trump’s well-known admiration for Putin and his belittling of NATO, the Russians have both the means and the motive to engage in a hack of the D.N.C. and the dump of its emails prior to the Democratic Convention. That foreign actors may be trying to influence our election—let alone a powerful adversary like Russia—should concern all Americans of any party.

In August, [it was reported](#), Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid wrote to FBI Director James Comey demanding disclosure of the contents of the dossier:

“In my communications with you and other top officials in the national security community, it has become clear that you possess explosive information about close ties and coordination between Donald Trump, his top advisors, and the Russian government...The public has a right to know this information.”

And, of course, Hillary Clinton famously accused Trump of being “Putin’s puppet” during their third presidential debate.

The Steele dossier was now driving the Obama administration’s scrutiny of Trump’s people as well as media coverage of the campaign.

Steele, the [BBC reported](#), “flew to Rome in August to talk to the FBI. Then in early October, he came to the US and was extensively debriefed by them, over a week. He gave the FBI the names of some of his informants, the so-called ‘key’ to the dossier.”

The FBI went to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) court and obtained an order to [“monitor the communications”](#) of Carter Page, as “part of an investigation into possible links between Russia and the campaign.” According to the [Guardian](#), the FISA court turned down its first application (an unusual event, if true), asking the agency to narrow its focus. Eventually, the FBI managed to convince the court that “there was probable cause to believe Page was acting as an agent of a foreign power.” What was the basis of this probable cause? [CNN](#) reported that the FBI based its application on the claims made in the Steele dossier. That’s very serious business. If the FBI was presenting the FISA court unverified material from the dossier as if it were verified then it was clearly deceiving the court in order to obtain a politically-motivated warrant.

By September 2016, [U.S. media](#) were reporting that Carter Page had become a person of interests for the U.S. government: “U.S. intelligence officials are seeking to determine whether an American businessman identified by Donald Trump as one of his foreign policy advisers has opened up private communications with senior Russian officials—including talks about the possible lifting of economic sanctions if the Republican nominee becomes president.” Words straight from the dossier. The same media report had “U.S. intelligence agencies” receiving reports that Page met one Igor Diveykin, who “serves as deputy chief for internal policy and is believed by U.S. officials to have responsibility for intelligence collected by Russian agencies about the U.S. election.” This too is almost verbatim from Steele’s July 19 memo.

The U.S. government has actually made very little pretense that it didn't make use of the dossier. FBI Director James Comey admitted to Congress that the dossier had been "one of the sources of information the bureau has used to bolster its investigation." Then, on Jan. 11, 2017, following Director of National Intelligence James Clapper's meeting with Trump during which he and Comey presented the president-elect a summary of the dossier, Clapper issued a strange [statement](#):

The intelligence community "has not made any judgment that the information in this document is reliable, and we did not rely upon it in any way for our conclusions. However, part of our obligation is to ensure that policymakers are provided with the fullest possible picture of any matters that might affect national security."

This was a classic non-denial denial. That he and his friends did not "rely" on the dossier doesn't mean that they didn't make full use of it.

Federal investigators also wiretapped Paul Manafort, both before and after the election and indeed right through to the last days of the Obama administration. According to [CNN](#), the FBI launched an investigation of Manafort in 2014 shortly after the Feb. 22, 2014, coup d'état in Ukraine. Manafort had worked as a political consultant work for former Ukraine President Viktor Yanukovich's Party of Regions. However, the "surveillance was discontinued at some point last year for lack of evidence." In other words, by the time Manafort went to work for the Trump campaign in May 2016, he was no longer under FBI surveillance. The FBI resumed its surveillance at just about the time the first of Steele's memos started arriving in Washington.

The wiretaps had nothing to do with the charges Special Counsel Robert Mueller has just brought against Manafort. Mueller's charges involve activities that took place long before Manafort joined the Trump campaign. What the FBI was looking for was evidence that Manafort was a conduit between the Kremlin and Trump.

Former Trump National Security Adviser Michael Flynn also featured prominently in the dossier. He too came under Obama administration surveillance. Indeed, Obama's people used the wiretaps in order to get him ousted from his newly-appointed position. Obama administration holdover, Acting Attorney General Sally Yates, listened in on a conversation Flynn had had with Russia's ambassador to the United States, Sergei Kislyak, on Dec. 29, 2016, and decided that the incoming national security adviser was susceptible to blackmail from the Russians. She never really explained on what grounds the Russians could or would blackmail Flynn. Her argument seemed to be that because Flynn had discussed the possible lifting of sanctions—a policy that would run contrary to that of the Obama administration that was still in office at the time this conversation had supposedly taken place—he had violated the Logan Act, which prohibits private individuals conducting U.S. foreign policy. No one has been prosecuted under this statute for 200 years. Why the Russians would want to invoke an obscure statute to threaten Flynn, an official well-disposed toward them, with a prosecution that could never succeed and thereby to undermine the very policy they were seeking, namely, the lifting of sanctions, was never explained. Nonetheless, armed with this nonsense, Yates rushed over to the White House demanding dismissal of Flynn. He was susceptible to blackmail and was therefore a security risk. It seemed to be a joke, but for reasons that remain baffling, the White House meekly complied with Yates's demand.

We now know that the Obama administration's surveillance of Trump's people reached pathological levels following the election. It is almost certain that the FBI did pay Steele to continue his work. The [Washington Post](#) reported that the bureau had "reached an agreement with [Steele] a few weeks before the election for the bureau to pay him to continue his work." The *Post* claims that "Ultimately, the FBI did not pay Steele. Communications between the bureau and the former spy were interrupted as Steele's now-famous dossier became the subject of news stories, congressional inquiries and presidential denials." This seems highly unlikely. According to a number of news stories, the Clinton campaign stopped paying Steele sometime at the end of October. Yet Steele continued sending memos through December. Somebody had to have paid him. Steele is not the type to work pro bono.

Obama people such as Samantha Power, Susan Rice and Ben Rhodes went on an unmasking rampage during the election and after. House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) [has claimed](#) that the Obama administration made "hundreds of requests during the 2016 presidential race to unmask the names of Americans in intelligence reports, including Trump transition officials." The requests were made without specific justifications on why the information was needed. More sinister were the activities of the Obama people after the election. Trowned by Trump, they vented their fury doing everything possible to undermine the incoming administration. The [New York Times](#) reported that during the last days of the Obama administration "White House officials scrambled to spread information about Russian efforts to undermine the presidential...across the government. Former American officials say they had two aims: to ensure that such meddling isn't duplicated in future American or European elections, and to leave a clear trail of intelligence for government investigators."

A former deputy assistant secretary of defense in the Obama administration official, Evelyn Farkas, [revealed that she was telling](#) her former colleagues:

Get as much information as you can, get as much intelligence as you can, before President Obama leaves the administration, because I had a fear that somehow that information would disappear with the senior people that left....That the Trump folks, if they found out how we knew what we knew about their, the staff, the Trump staff's dealing with Russians, that they would try to compromise those sources and methods, meaning we would no longer have access to that intelligence. So I became very worried, because not enough was coming out into the open, and I knew that there was more.

The full extent of the Obama administration's campaign of surveillance, espionage and sabotage has yet to be revealed. The right-wing media have excitedly latched onto the Clinton revelations in order to put out a ridiculous story of their own. Americans are still innocent victims; Russians are still villains interfering with our gloriously pristine elections. The new victim-in-chief is Trump and the new Russian colluder-in-chief is Clinton. As ever, nothing changes in Washington.

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