

The Russiagate Scandal Descends into Total Absurdity

US government paralysed as frantic searches for evidence to prove scandal true fail one by one

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Even as the Trump administration disintegrates – with the President publicly quarreling with his Secretary of State, and his Chief of Staff forced to deny he is about to resign – the scandal which more than anything else has defined this Presidency has disintegrated into total lunacy.

Consider these facts.

(1) The Mueller investigation

Just a few weeks ago the media was full of reports of how Special Counsel Mueller's investigation was "closing in" on the President and his campaign team. The focus of media interest was on an early morning search in July of the house of Paul Manafort, the campaign professional who at one time acted as the Trump campaign's chairman, with [lurid headlines](#) that he was about to be indicted, though it was never made clear for what.

Since then there has been nothing, a clear sign that the search of Manafort's house has come up with nothing, and that the pressure to get Manafort to talk by dangling threats of indictment in front of him have resulted in nothing.

In all other respects a curtain of silence has fallen on Mueller's investigation, a strong sign that after its failure to "break" Manafort it no longer has a clear strategy of what to do.

(2) The Senate Intelligence Committee

This held a portentous press conference recently to announce the findings of its nine month investigation into the Russiagate allegations. As a result of that press conference we learnt that

.....the committee and its staff have conducted more than 100 interviews, comprising 250 hours of testimony and resulting in 4,000 pages of transcripts, and reviewed more than 100,000 documents relevant to Russiagate. The staff, said Warner, has collectively spent a total of 57 hours per day, seven days a week, since the committee opened its inquiry, going through documents and transcripts, interviewing witnesses, and analyzing both classified and unclassified material.

The result of all this impressive activity? Precisely nothing. Here is what Senator Richard Burr, its Republican chairman, had to say

There are concerns that we continue to pursue. Collusion? The committee continues to look into all evidence to see if there was any hint of collusion. Now, I'm not going to even discuss any initial findings because we haven't any

(bold added)

The position has been [summed up perfectly](#) by President Trump's spokeswoman, Sarah Huckabee Sanders

MS. SANDERS: I think more importantly than the President being frustrated, I think the American people are frustrated. The Senate Intel Committee told us yesterday that, after nearly nine months of investigated — that's included more than 100 interviews, over more than 250 hours, 4,000 pages of transcripts, 100,000 pages of documents, interviewing officials in the intelligence community who wrote the report on Russian election meddling, interviewing relevant Obama administration officials, and talking to every Trump campaign official they've requested — it's literally found zero evidence of collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia.

I think that the American people would like them to focus on some other things. I know that we certainly have said this all along, and we're glad that as they continue this process they're coming to the same conclusion.

(bold added)

Notwithstanding this urging "to focus on some other things", Senator Burr continues to insist that the question of possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia - the heart of the Russiagate scandal - is "still open". One wonders how much more money, time and work it will need before he finally accepts that it should be closed?

(3) Social media

Relentless pressure on the leading social media platforms - Facebook, Google and Twitter - from people like the Senate Intelligence Committee's Deputy Chair Senator Warner has unearthed a tiny number of advertisements and comments costing in aggregate substantially less than a million dollars which are 'assessed' to have 'some' unspecified connection to Russia.

Most of these advertisements and comments did not appear during last year's US Presidential election and were not about it. Some of those which did were pro-Hillary Clinton and anti-Donald Trump. There is however no rhyme or reason to these advertisements and comments, many of which were on non-political subjects, including such momentous matters as puppies.

A reasonable person would conclude that this small number of advertisements and comments could have had no bearing or influence on last year's US Presidential election, and that they were not intended to have any.

A reasonable person would also conclude that the tiny number of these advertisements and

comments – unearthed after frantic and relentless searches by the social media platforms after they were put under intense pressure from the politicians to come up with something – their vague and contradictory material, and their nebulous connection to Russia, in fact proves that there was NO sinister Russian plot to swing last year’s election to Donald Trump by using social media, or even a Russian plot via social media to create doubts about it.

There is however nothing remotely reasonable about the true believers of the Russiagate scandal. On the contrary they have latched onto this material – whose lack of substance in fact proves the absurdity of their claims – not as disproving their claims but rather as vindication that what they have been saying all along about “Russian meddling in the election” has now been proved to be true. A whole stream of strange articles (see for example this [one](#) in the Financial Times) has appeared in the establishment media which all but say this.

To which one can only say that when evidence of the non-existence of a conspiracy is taken as proof of its existence it becomes clear that all connection to reality and indeed to sanity has been lost.

(4) Attempted Russian hacking of state voting systems

In some ways this was the most bizarre recent claim of all. It has been [thoroughly discussed](#) by Glenn Greenwald and to his commentary I have little to add.

What makes this episode bizarre is that the claim that the Russians hacked or attempted to hack the voting systems of US states is one which has been made repeatedly over the course of the scandal, only to be invariably and repeatedly proved to be false.

The latest iteration of this claim was in an article in USA Today sourced from the Department of Homeland Security which claimed that the Russians had attempted to hack the voting systems of 21 states.

Needless to say the claim was immediately picked up and repeated with enthusiasm by all sorts of people until two of the states involved – Wisconsin and California – categorically denied it, upon which the Department of Homeland Security was forced to issue a retraction.

To which one can only ask: how often does this story have to be refuted before it is accepted as false?

Overall one senses a scandalous story of nefarious collusion and double-dealing between the Trump campaign and Russia which now rests on nothing but hot air as all attempts to prove it true fail one by one.

In the meantime the American public and even parts of the media are losing interest, as shown by the fact that the scandal hardly comes up in White House news conferences any more.

Serious damage however continues to be done.

The scandal has paralysed the foreign policy of the US government as Donald Trump’s signature policy upon which he was elected – rapprochement with Russia – has been blocked because of a concocted scandal with no substance behind it.

The result unsurprisingly is an angry President, resentful at how his signature policy has been blocked, who having no clear idea what to do, is hitting out in all directions, sometimes by behaving spitefully towards his own staff.

Moreover, as the disintegration of the scandal makes it all but impossible for the President to be removed from office through his impeachment (the original intention of those who concocted it), this chaotic and unhappy state of affairs looks likely to continue indefinitely.

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