

SpyGate 101: A Primer On The Russia Collusion Hoax To Down Trump

As Special Counsel John Durham continues to expose more details of the "SpyGate" or "Russia collusion" scandal, it can be difficult for any apolitical, non-news-junkie member of the public to grasp the ongoing developments.

After all, for more than five years, the corrupt legacy media has refused to report on scandal or done so with a slanted portrayal of the facts. So most Americans remain unaware of the Democrats' years-long duplicity that sought to destroy first candidate and then President Donald Trump. Add to that reality the overlapping conspiracies and sprawling cast of characters involved, and it can be difficult to follow the story.

That the scandal is dense, however, does not mean it should be ignored. To the contrary, the duplicity must not be disregarded because what Trump's political enemies tried to accomplish over the course of five years represents the biggest threat our constitutional republic has seen in the last century.

So for those who care about our country and her future but don't want to be buried in the minutia of the scandal, here is your big-picture primer.

DNC Emails Are Hacked

While every thread of SpyGate could be unraveled more, April 30, 2016,

marks the cleanest point to pin the start of the intrigue. It was then, amid the contested presidential primaries, that the Democratic National Committee learned that its computer network had been breached. The DNC then [hired](#) a company called CrowdStrike to investigate the hack, and by mid-May, CrowdStrike concluded that Russian actors were responsible for the hack, which the DNC then reported to the FBI.

The public first learned about the DNC server hack on June 14, 2016, when The Washington Post broke the story. Then, on July 22, 2016, after Trump and Hillary Clinton had been declared the presidential nominees, WikiLeaks released a trove of documents, purportedly obtained through the DNC hack.

These documents included emails in which then-DNC Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz and other party officials disparaged Clinton's primary opponent, Bernie Sanders. The behind-the-scenes communiques also revealed that the DNC, which should maintain neutrality between primary candidates, favored Clinton, with top officials plotting ways to harm the Sanders campaign.

Clinton Campaign Plots to Convert DNC Scandal into Trump Scandal

The timing of WikiLeaks' release of the DNC emails couldn't have been worse, with delegates poised in Pennsylvania to officially nominate Clinton the Democratic candidate for president. But by Sunday evening, the Clinton campaign had devised a strategy to respond to the scandal: blame it on Trump.

"I'm Jake Tapper at the Democratic Convention in beautiful Philadelphia, where the state of our union is exposed emails just

published by WikiLeaks showing Democratic Party officials actively discussing possible ways to sabotage Bernie Sanders, even as they were insisting publicly that they were staying neutral during the primaries," the CNN host opened the video [segment](#) that launched the Russia collusion hoax.

Tapper introduced Clinton's then-campaign manager Robby Mook, asking him the campaign's reaction to the leaked emails. After responding that the DNC needed to "look into this and take appropriate action," Mook pivoted to Trump, premiering the Russia conspiracy theory that would consume the country for the next five years.

"What's disturbing to us," Mook began, is that "experts are telling us that Russian state actors broke into the DNC, stole these emails, and other experts are now saying that the Russians are releasing these emails for the purpose of actually helping Donald Trump."

Mook continued:

"I don't think it's coincidental that these emails were released on the eve of our convention here, and that's disturbing. And I think we need to be concerned about that. I think we need to be concerned that we also saw last week at the Republican Convention that Trump and his allies made changes to the Republican platform to make it more pro-Russian. And we saw him talking about how NATO shouldn't intervene to defend — necessarily should intervene to defend our Eastern European allies if they are attacked by Russia. So I think, when you put all this together, it's a disturbing picture. And I think voters need to reflect on that."

When Tapper asked Mook for evidence to support his claims, Mook

cited unnamed experts and press reports “that the hackers that got into the DNC are very likely by to be working in coordination with Russia.”

“If the Russians in fact had these emails, again, I don’t think it’s very coincidental that they are being released at this time to create maximum damage on Hillary Clinton and to help Donald Trump,” Mook reiterated.

“It is a very, very strong charge that you’re leveling here,” Tapper interjected. “You’re basically suggesting that Russians hacked into the DNC and now are releasing these files through WikiLeaks to help elect Donald Trump.”

Again, Mook deflected to “a number of experts,” saying, “Experts have said that it is the Russians that, in fact, went in and took these emails. And then, if they are the ones who took them, we have to infer that they are the ones then releasing them.”

Clinton Campaign Co-Opts the Russia Collusion Hoax

While the Clinton campaign introduced the Russia collusion hoax on the eve of the DNC convention to convert the Sanders’ scandal into one about Trump, the strategy also proved a perfect response to the second Clinton scandal — this one involving Clinton’s illegal use of a private server during her time as secretary of state.

The New York Times first [broke the news](#) on March 2, 2015, that Clinton had used a private email server to communicate as secretary of state under President Barack Obama. Two days later, the Select Committee

on Benghazi subpoenaed any Benghazi-related emails contained on the private server. Upon learning of the document request, a technician for Clinton's computer service provider deleted approximately 30,000 of Clinton's emails, which she claimed were personal emails.

By May of 2016, the State Department's Office of the Inspector General had released an 83-page report [condemning](#) Clinton's use of the server. Coverage of this report [stressed](#) that the State Department had "deemed more than 2,000 of Clinton's messages as classified, including 22 that were upgraded to the most sensitive national security classification, 'top secret.'" At the time, the media also noted that "the FBI is still probing whether any laws were broken laws by putting classified information at risk — or whether her staff improperly sent sensitive information knowing it wasn't on a classified system."

The Clinton campaign tried to downplay the FBI's involvement in the private-server scandal by framing it as "a security inquiry," but in response to questions about that characterization, then-FBI Director James Comey [said](#) he was "not familiar with the term 'security inquiry,'" stressing "the word investigation" is "in our name."

"We're conducting an investigation. ... That's what we do. That's probably all I can say about it," Comey concluded.

At a press conference two months later, on July 5, 2016, Comey [announced](#) that the FBI had completed its investigation and that while Clinton's handling of classified information was "extremely careless," he had referred the matter to the Department of Justice with a recommendation that no charges be filed. Comey took this same position when he testified before Congress, there calling Clinton's conduct related to the server "sloppy."

Although Comey publicly declared the investigation into Clinton's private server closed, when Democrats gathered for their convention in Philadelphia, her campaign continued to face questions about the scandal, with Tapper drilling Mook about Comey's conclusion that Clinton's use of the private server had been "sloppy." Mook quickly changed the conversation to "this election" and what "voters are looking for and asking about in this election."

Two days later, though, the media took Mook's lead and converted the Clinton server scandal into a scandal about Trump. A July 26, 2016, opinion [article](#) for USA Today, titled "Putin for President 2016," opened with an acknowledgment that Clinton's "secret private-server emails are almost certainly already in the hands of Russian intelligence," and concluded, "Putin can embarrass Hillary — or worse — whenever he wants."

"We're getting a small foretaste of that in the release of hacked Democratic National Committee emails," the piece continued, speaking of the DNC officials engaged in "dirty tricks aimed at Bernie Sanders" and "getting awfully chummy with some allegedly professional journalists." And with that, the media converted Clinton's use of a private server to a story about Trump and Russia's supposed backing of his candidacy.

From then on, the Clinton campaign and a complicit media framed any concern over her use of a home-brew server and any questions about the details buried in the DNC emails not as a scandal about Clinton but as a conspiracy between Trump and Vladimir Putin.

Clinton Campaign Pays for and Peddles Fake Trump-Russia Evidence

By the last week of July 2016, the Russia collusion diversion controlled the narrative, and Democrats repurposed every question about the DNC hack or the sever scandal as an opportunity to peddle it.

Similarly, Clinton's team converted every comment by Trump, even tangentially related to Russia, as further evidence of a conspiracy. Likewise, her campaign framed every Russia connection, past or present, between Trump, his business, his family, or members of his campaign as concrete proof of collusion.

While the Clinton campaign had not gone public with the Russia-collusion angle until July 24, 2016, when Mook marketed that theme on CNN, it had been collecting supposed intel on Trump's connections to Russia for some time.

In the first half of 2016, Perkins Coie, the law firm that represented the Clinton campaign, had hired private investigation firm Fusion GPS to collect opposition research on Trump. In turn, Fusion GPS hired Christopher Steele in May or June of 2016 to focus on Trump's connections to Russia, and by June 20, 2016, Steele had drafted the first of some 17 memoranda that would eventually compose what is now known colloquially as the Steele dossier.

Steele shared his initial memorandum — which contained claims that the Kremlin had blackmail material on Trump, including the salacious and false "golden showers" accusation — with an FBI contact on July 5, 2016. Over the next six months, Steele continued to craft the dossier, relying primarily on an unnamed "Primary Sub-Source," now known to be Russian national Igor Danchenko.

Danchenko, who has since been indicted for lying to the FBI, is also

alleged to have invented some of the supposed intel contained in the dossier. Danchenko also fed Steele false information about the Trump campaign, which a Clinton booster had invented and then passed on to Danchenko.

The bottom line some five-plus years later is that the dossier consisted of a few publicly known accurate facts and a litany of false claims concocted by Danchenko and others and then sold by Steele and the Clinton campaign as the work of a former MI6 Russian expert.

The Steele dossier represented but one aspect of the invented evidence of collusion. The Clinton campaign also paid Perkins Coie lawyer Michael Sussmann for his work in crafting, with the assistance of various tech experts, a report purporting to show that the Trump organization had established a secret-communication network with the powerful Russian Alfa Bank.

Additionally, computer scientists who had worked with the Clinton campaign's attorney "[surveilled](#) the internet traffic at Trump Tower, at his New York City apartment building, and later at the executive office of the president of the United States, then fed disinformation about that traffic to intelligence agencies hoping to frame Trump as a Russia-connected stooge."

As Steele, Fusion GPS, and other Clinton backers created fraudulent reports, they, along with the Clinton campaign and her lawyers, exploited their relationships with reporters and government officials.

Steele and/or Fusion GPS's founder Glenn Simpson shared Steele's memoranda with various news outlets. They also fed the supposed intel to members of the law enforcement and intelligence communities,

including representatives in the Departments of Justice and State. After the FBI fired Steele as a source because he had spoken with the media, it arranged for him to continue providing his reports to the FBI by having him meet with a Justice Department attorney instead.

This dual-prong approach resulted in a public saturated with circular confirmation of Trump-Russia collusion. Outlets parroted the false details fed to reporters by Steele and then referenced the FBI's investigations into the same matters to create the appearance that the investigations confirmed the validity of the leaks. Simultaneously, the FBI used media reports as a basis to confirm Steele's supposed intel.

Obama Admin Spies on Trump Campaign Under Knowingly False Pretenses

On July 31, 2016, the Obama administration and the FBI launched an investigation into the Trump campaign, branded "Crossfire Hurricane." While to this day, the FBI maintains it opened Crossfire Hurricane after U.S. officials learned from an Australian diplomat that young Trump adviser George Papadopoulos had bragged "that the Russians had dirt on Hillary Clinton," former Attorney General William Barr and Special Counsel John Durham have both questioned that account.

The Obama administration's targeting of the opposition party's presidential campaign came just as the Clinton campaign began publicly pushing the narrative that Trump was colluding with Russia to interfere in the 2016 presidential election. And the opening of Crossfire Hurricane came three days after then-CIA Director John Brennan [briefed](#) President Barack Obama and other senior national security officials on intelligence alleging "that U.S. Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton had approved a campaign plan to stir up a scandal against U.S.

Presidential candidate Donald Trump by tying him to Putin and the Russians' hacking of the Democratic National Committee."

Brennan's briefing also noted that intelligence agencies had obtained intel indicating that on July 26, 2016, Clinton approved "a proposal from one of her foreign policy advisors to vilify Donald Trump by stirring up a scandal claiming interference by Russian security services." In early September 2016, a U.S. intelligence official would forward an investigative referral to the FBI regarding "Clinton's approval of a plan" about "Trump and Russian hackers hampering U.S. elections as a means of distracting the public from her use of a private mail server."

Even with this foreknowledge of the Clinton campaign's plot to frame Trump, and even while watching the execution of the plan in real time, the FBI moved forward with Crossfire Hurricane. The FBI would also later use Steele's fraudulent reporting to obtain four court orders from the secret FISA court to surveil a former Trump campaign volunteer named Carter Page.

While Page was no longer connected to the campaign when the FBI obtained the FISA surveillance orders, the warrant allowed the FBI to access prior correspondence between Page and the Trump campaign, as well as any communications Page continued to have with individual campaign members. Further, while FISA proceedings are secret, media leaks about the targeting of Page gave the press more material to further the Russia-collusion spin.

Accessing private campaign emails, however, represented but one aspect of the spying that took place under the auspices of Crossfire Hurricane. The FBI also tasked a Confidential Human Source (CHS) with [questioning](#) Page, and that CHS "sought specific details from Page

related to the Trump campaign, and fed Page unsolicited (and potentially illegal) advice concerning campaign strategy."

The FBI used the same CHS to question Sam Clovis, a senior member of the Trump campaign. In a recorded conversation, the CHS posed several questions about sensitive campaign strategies and concerns.

The spying on Trump's campaign also included the FBI using a private Trump security briefing as a possible opportunity to collect information for the investigation.

Investigation into Trump Continues During His Administration

Significantly, Crossfire Hurricane did not end with the 2016 election. Instead, after Trump defeated Clinton, the investigation continued and so did the leaks, with Comey giving Trump a briefing on the Steele dossier — a fact then leaked to give CNN a pretext to report on the Steele dossier.

After Trump's inauguration, the FBI hatched a plot to oust the president's national security adviser, again with the help of the media. Comey also began writing secret memoranda of conversations he had with now-President Trump. And after Trump fired Comey, the latter leaked those memoranda to the media through a law professor friend, triggering the appointment of Special Counsel Robert Mueller.

Mueller continued Crossfire Hurricane, retaining many of the original FBI agents. The country would later learn that many of those investigating the Trump campaign held rabid anti-Trump sentiments, when text messages [exchanged](#) by members of the Crossfire Hurricane

team were made public. Other text messages went missing when several agents wiped their cell phones.

The public learned of even more malfeasance by the Crossfire Hurricane team when the DOJ's Office of the Inspector General released a 400-plus-page report [concluding](#) that the DOJ included 17 significant inaccuracies and omissions in the FISA application and renewals related to Carter Page.

These problems and others led then-AG William Barr to appoint U.S. Attorney John Durham to lead an investigation into Crossfire Hurricane, later naming him a special prosecutor.

As part of his investigation, Durham revealed additional misconduct in Crossfire Hurricane when he obtained a guilty plea from a former FBI attorney for altering an email related to the FISA case against Page.

Durham's team also obtained a [statement](#) from another FBI agent involved in the investigation named William Barnett. Barnett told DOJ investigators that there was never any basis for the bizarre "collusion" theory and that Mueller's office pushed prosecutions with a "get Trump" mentality. But even then, Mueller found no evidence of Trump colluding with Russia.

There are thousands more details already known and many more players involved — and that's before whatever else Durham may reveal. But just these basics provide all the information you need to understand SpyGate — and to see why it far surpasses the Watergate scandal.

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