

Mueller investigation seeks to implicate WikiLeaks and Julian Assange in “Russian interference”

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The investigation headed by Special Counsel and former FBI director Robert Mueller into alleged “collusion” between the Trump campaign and Russia during the 2016 presidential election has entered a new stage.

Mueller is seeking to substantiate the case he advanced last month—as part of the indictment of 12 Russian intelligence officers—that Trump campaign insider Roger Stone and WikiLeaks editor Julian Assange were part of a conspiracy to hack and publish emails sent by the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and Hillary Clinton’s campaign chairperson John Podesta (see: “In run-up to Trump-Putin summit, Mueller charges 12 Russian officers with DNC email hack”).

At least eight alleged “associates” of Roger Stone have been questioned or subpoenaed by Mueller’s investigation. One, Kristin Davis, gave a voluntary interview last month and was instructed to give formal testimony again to a grand jury last Friday. Another, Andrew Miller, refused to appear the same day and has been ruled in contempt of court. Last Thursday, Mueller also subpoenaed radio commentator and WikiLeaks supporter Randy Credico to testify on September 7.

Credico’s lawyer stated last Friday that the Mueller investigation “probably want to talk to him about Roger Stone and Julian Assange.” Kristin Davis told CNN on Monday that the grand jury had questioned her “about whether or not any collusion happened with Russia.”

The purported evidence of a nefarious plot involving Russian intelligence, Stone and WikiLeaks is threadbare to the point of being ludicrous.

Julian Assange publicly revealed in an interview that WikiLeaks had information on the Democratic campaign in June 2016. It published the DNC leaks on July 22, 2016.

Roger Stone claimed to be “communicating” with Assange on August 8. His first alleged messages to Randy Credico, however, asking the radio host if he could use his connection with Assange to find out if WikiLeaks had more material, were not even sent until September.

Likewise, Stone’s tweets to alleged hacker “Guccifer 2”—whom American intelligence claims was a front for Russian agencies—were sent *after* WikiLeaks was in possession of the leaked emails and had already published the DNC files.

While WikiLeaks cannot and does not reveal its sources, a credible claim has been made by one of its supporters—British whistleblower Craig Murray—that the leaks were made by DNC insiders, not hackers.

In regard to the DNC and other Democratic Party emails, the source is irrelevant in any case. By any standard of journalism, they were newsworthy. They exposed the real conspiracy that had taken place in the course of the presidential election: a deliberate campaign by the ostensibly impartial DNC to undermine the campaign of Bernie Sanders and ensure Hillary Clinton won the nomination.

WikiLeaks published the DNC emails on the eve of the Democratic Party National Convention. The revelations provoked fury among many of the 13 million Americans who had voted for Sanders in the Democratic primaries, in large part due to their support for his denunciations of the “billionaire class” and populist vows to fight for greater social equality.

DNC chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz was forced to resign in disgrace before the convention. After it concluded, DNC CEO Amy Dacey, CFO Brad Marshall, and Communications Director Luis Miranda also resigned.

On October 7, 2016, WikiLeaks published a trove of

emails sent by John Podesta, the chairman of the Clinton campaign. As with the DNC leaks, the information was highly newsworthy. The emails included transcripts of speeches given by Hillary Clinton to various bank and corporate forums, where she boasted of her support for Wall Street and commitment to the interests of the financial oligarchy.

The exposures made by WikiLeaks only served to underscore what millions of American workers and youth had already decided, faced with the choice between Trump and Clinton: neither big business candidate could be supported. Trump won the Electoral College and the presidency because, amid an overall fall in voter turnout, Clinton did not win sufficient support in a small number of key states, despite winning the overall national popular vote by more than three million. Russian “meddling,” even if it were taking place, had no significant role in the outcome.

The entire “Russian interference” conspiracy theory could be dismissed as absurd if it were not being so relentlessly pursued by powerful sections of the American establishment, and did not have such immense implications for both democratic rights in the US and world political relations.

The campaign has served deeply reactionary purposes. Firstly, it has been used to demand sweeping censorship of oppositional, primarily left-wing views from internet search engines, Facebook and other social media sites, on the pretext of purging “fake news.”

At the same time, it has played a significant role in the intensified persecution of Julian Assange himself. The WikiLeaks editor has been slandered as a Russian stooge, even as his communication with the outside world has been cut off and preparations made to force him out of the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where he was granted political asylum in 2012. Assange faces the danger of being detained in Britain while American authorities file to extradite him to the US to stand trial on false charges of espionage.

Secondly, the hysteria over “meddling” has been used to pressure the Trump administration to maintain a bellicose foreign policy against Russia, threatening to trigger conflict in the Middle East and Europe.

Finally, the claim of collusion is clearly viewed as a possible means to force out or impeach Trump, ending his erratic presidency through a palace coup, and replacing him with his right-wing, Christian fundamentalist vice president Mike Pence.

The accusations against Roger Stone are central to this

agenda. The unstated insinuation is that Trump, through his relations with Stone, was in some way aware of, and consented to, a plot to influence the election outcome.

On September 27, 2017, Stone faced down hostile questioning by the House Intelligence Committee. He specifically denied “the charge that I had advance knowledge of the timing, content and source of the WikiLeaks disclosures from the DNC.” He stated that his only communication with WikiLeaks had taken place through a “journalist” who served as a “go-between.” He later named Randy Credico.

Credico has indicated he will contradict Stone before the Mueller investigation, to the extent that he denies that exchanging some messages made him a “go-between” for the right-wing political operator with WikiLeaks. He has also indicated, however, that he will testify that he does not have any knowledge of a direct relationship between Stone and Assange.

WikiLeaks has repeatedly tweeted that it did not discuss the details or schedule of its publications with Stone.

The main consequence of Mueller’s subpoena of Credico, and ongoing pursuit of Stone, over alleged links to WikiLeaks is that it ensures that “Russian meddling” will remain prominent in the US media in the lead-up to the November congressional elections.

The forces that stand behind the hysteria appear to be calculating that the constant accusations that the Trump campaign engaged in collusion or even “treason” will help ensure the Democratic Party wins a majority in the House of Representatives. This would provide a new base of power for conducting investigations and otherwise putting pressure on the administration, as well as raising the possibility of impeachment.



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