

Stone indictment presents no evidence of links between WikiLeaks and Trump campaign

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The indictment of right-wing political operative Roger Stone by special counsel and former FBI director Robert Mueller presented no evidence of “collusion” by WikiLeaks and its publisher Julian Assange with either the Trump campaign or Russian intelligence, after more than 17 months of investigation.

The indictment of Stone, dated January 24, 2019, is at the same time a damning indictment of all those in the political establishment and the media—particularly the *Guardian* and *Washington Post*—who have taken part in the slanderous attempt to tarnish WikiLeaks and Assange as “agents” of Russia and Trump.

The Stone indictment revealed nothing that was not already known regarding WikiLeaks, which it called “Organization 1.” It has simply underscored that WikiLeaks is a media organization which exercised the legally protected rights of the press under the First Amendment and the Supreme Court decision in the 1971 Pentagon Papers case. A media organization is entitled to publish information in the public interest, even if the source obtained it illegally.

Sometime in 2016, unknown sources provided WikiLeaks with emails that had been taken from the servers of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and from the personal email account of John Podesta, the chairperson of Hillary Clinton’s campaign for the Democratic Party presidential nomination.

Mueller’s indictment stated: “By in or around June or July 2016, STONE informed senior Trump Campaign officials that he had information indicating Organization 1 had documents whose release would be damaging to the Clinton Campaign.”

To obtain this “information,” all Stone and the Trump campaign needed to do was read the news. On June 12, 2016, Julian Assange stated, in an interview with British ITV’s “Peston on Sunday,” that WikiLeaks had emails linked to Hillary Clinton and would be publishing them.

By this point, the DNC and Podesta had publicly claimed that their servers had been hacked, so it was not a mystery as to what “emails” Assange indicated WikiLeaks had in its possession.

On July 22, 2016, WikiLeaks published the DNC emails. The publication took place on the eve of the Democratic National Convention, where the decision was going to be taken as whether to nominate Clinton or her main rival, self-styled “democratic socialist” Bernie Sanders.

The emails exposed, for the benefit of Democratic voters and the American population, that the Democratic primaries had been tainted by sordid intrigues by the ostensibly neutral DNC to

undermine Sanders’ campaign in the interests of Clinton. The US and international media recognized the newsworthiness of the revelations and widely published and commented on them.

The leadership of the DNC issued groveling apologies and resigned in disgrace. Clinton, who had been rejected by some 13 million Democratic voters in the primaries because of her right-wing, militarist and pro-big business history and policies, was nevertheless nominated as the presidential candidate, with the complicit endorsement of Sanders.

Following the publication of the DNC leak, Mueller’s investigation “discovered” the hardly earth-shattering fact that the Trump campaign and Roger Stone wanted to know what else WikiLeaks would be publishing. Every government, intelligence agency and media publication in the world, along with every American political party, wanted to know.

Stone, who while not formally working for the Trump campaign was actively supporting it, made attempts to find out.

Mueller’s indictment documents how Stone made contact with “Person 1” and “Person 2.” Person 1 is effectively identified as former Infowars.com head Jerome Corsi, while Person 2 is effectively identified as “radio host” Randy Credico. Both Corsi and Credico have been interviewed by the investigation.

Person 1 (Corsi) replied to an inquiry from Stone in early August: “Word is friend in embassy [Assange] plans 2 more dumps. One shortly after I’m back. 2nd in October.”

Corsi never met with Assange. He had no direct contact with WikiLeaks. He has claimed he formed this conclusion by deduction. It is also possible he may have been repeating rumors he had heard third-hand. Whichever is the case, his information was wrong. WikiLeaks made only one further “dump” relating to the US election—the publication of the Podesta emails on October 7, 2016.

These files included transcripts of speeches made by Clinton to corporate audiences, during which she gave reassurances she would look after the interests of the major banks and corporations and boasted of her role in the US-led war against Libya, which destroyed the country and has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths.

Stone, a well-known self-promoter, made boasts in August that he was in personal contact with Assange and later even claimed he had had dinner with him. Both claims were false. He attempted to establish relations with WikiLeaks through Corsi and Randy Credico, with whom he had a previous association.

On September 18, Stone asked Credico to contact Assange and ask him to supply emails sent by Clinton “from August 10 to August 30, 2011”—during which time Stone and others have alleged she sabotaged peace talks to end the US-led war against Libya.

Credico, according to the indictment, forwarded the request to a lawyer who allegedly had contact with Assange. It is unclear if Assange ever saw Stone’s request. If he did, he rejected it. WikiLeaks did not send leaked emails it had been provided to Roger Stone or anyone else.

The indictment indicates that Credico engaged in little more than speculation in his exchanges with Stone, while Stone engaged in total speculation in his contact with Trump campaign officials. He actually knew nothing about WikiLeaks’ publication schedule.

On October 3, 2016, Credico texted Stone: “I think it’s on for tomorrow”—an apparent reference to the release of the Podesta emails.

In fact, on October 4, Julian Assange only gave a press conference. He stated that WikiLeaks would be publishing “every week for the next 10 weeks,” including information on the US election, and that publication would begin “this week.”

In this context, the Mueller indictment of Stone contains two highly significant omissions.

Firstly, Mueller made no accusation, because he clearly had no evidence, that the release of the Podesta emails on October 7, 2016 was timed, in collusion with the Trump campaign, to undermine the impact of the video showing Trump boasting to Access Hollywood host Billy Bush in 2005 that he would “grab” a woman by her private parts.

Instead, the opposite is likely the case. The Access Hollywood video was leaked to the *Washington Post* on October 7 and rapidly published to undermine the impact of the Podesta emails. NBC, which had the video, was not intending to publish it that day.

As Julian Assange later tweeted on October 16, 2017: “On Clinton’s ‘timing’ conspiracy theory. That we had a pending publication about to launch on the election was everywhere in the media for days. We were meant to launch that morning. It is the Trump tape that was moved forward from Monday [October 10, 2016] to Friday [October 7, 2016].”

Nevertheless, in a shameless article published yesterday, the *Washington Post*—relying solely on an unverified statement by Jerome Corsi who has made a deal with Mueller to testify against Stone—once again implied that Assange colluded with Stone in the release of the Podesta emails.

Secondly, Mueller left out of the indictment the only contact that WikiLeaks did have with Roger Stone during the election—an exchange of private tweets on October 13, 2016.

Stone messaged WikiLeaks to complain that it had publicly stated it had no relations with him. The right-wing operative asserted that he was “defending” WikiLeaks, so it should therefore stop “attacking” him.

WikiLeaks replied: “We appreciate that [the defence]. However, the false claims of association are being used by the democrats to undermine the impact of our publications. Don’t go there if you don’t want us to correct you.”

Stone replied two days later: “Ha, the more you ‘correct’ me the

more people think you are lying. *Your operation leaks like a sieve.*” [emphasis added]

Mueller, in other words, omitted a categorical statement from WikiLeaks that the claims of association were “false.” Stone’s reference to leaking like “a sieve” also points to how he and others may have obtained the “information” they put into the public domain: via gossip and partial details, of varying accuracy, that were related to them by indiscrete people within and around WikiLeaks.

The organizations, publications and individuals attacking WikiLeaks and Assange for publishing the DNC and Podesta leaks should at least be honest about their motives.

They represent that faction of the American ruling class that want the presidency to be controlled by the war-mongers, big business agents and enemies of democracy and the working class in the Democratic Party, instead of the war-mongers, big business agents and enemies of democracy and the working class in the Republican Party and around Trump.

They want Assange railroaded into prison or worse, and WikiLeaks shut down, because they have helped the American population understand the reality of the two-party system in the United States. The choice between the Democrats and the Republicans is, as Assange put it, a choice between “gonorrhea and syphilis.”

The aim of the vendetta against Assange has always been to intimidate and silence all independent and critical journalists and would-be whistleblowers.

The WWS and ICFI defend Julian Assange and WikiLeaks as a matter of political principle. If he is charged for publishing the truth, it will have the most sweeping implications for freedom of speech.

We call on all defenders of democratic rights to demand the immediate and unconditional right of Assange to leave the Ecuadorian embassy in London, with guaranteed protection from any charges or extradition to the United States.



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