

Declassified Mueller investigation transcripts confirm no evidence WikiLeaks colluded with Russia

Thomas Scripps
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A central claim of the Mueller investigation into supposed Russian interference in the 2016 US Presidential Election was the allegation that Russian agents hacked the server of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and passed emails on to WikiLeaks.

These emails, published by WikiLeaks in July 2016, revealed that the DNC had conspired to undermine Bernie Sanders' campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination. The supposed "Russian connection" was baldly asserted ad-nauseam by the Democratic Party, US intelligence officials and dutifully repeated ever since by the corporate media, even after Mueller's investigation collapsed.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* commented at the time, this was always a politically motivated lie, designed to distort the American working class' rejection of warmongering Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, discredit WikiLeaks, and advance an anti-democratic palace coup against Donald Trump. No evidence was ever provided for these assertions besides the say-so of anonymous members of the "intelligence community."

Newly released testimony given to the House Intelligence Committee (HIC) confirms that these intelligence officials and Democratic Party operatives were deliberately spreading a lie. The source of the claim that Russian agents had hacked the DNC server was cyber security company CrowdStrike, hired by the Democratic Party to investigate its data breach. But, when interviewed by the HIC in December 2017, CrowdStrike President Shawn Henry admitted they had no good evidence that data was even hacked from the DNC's server, let alone that Russian hackers had done so.

His testimony has been covered up for more than two years. According to journalist Aaron Maté, in September 2018 the HIC voted unanimously to release the transcripts of witness interviews (including Henry's). But in March 2019, Democratic Representative Adam Schiff—who was one of those conducting the interview with Henry—ordered the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) to withhold the documents from White House lawyers intending to review them for executive privilege. Schiff refused to release the transcripts until a few days ago, after Trump ally and acting ODNI Director Richard Grenell threatened to release them himself.

Henry's statements to the Intelligence Committee make repeated reference to "indicators" and "circumstantial evidence" of a hack, but these cannot disguise the fact that no hard proof could be produced. He makes this admission in several of his answers to Committee members' questions:

"We did not have concrete evidence that the data was exfiltrated [moved electronically] from the DNC, but we have indicators that it was exfiltrated."

"There are times when we can see data exfiltrated, and we can say conclusively. But in this case it appears it was set up to be exfiltrated, but we just don't have the evidence that says it actually left."

"There's not evidence that they were actually exfiltrated. There's circumstantial evidence but no evidence that they were actually exfiltrated."

"There is circumstantial evidence that that data was exfiltrated off the network... We didn't have a sensor in place that saw data leave. We said that the data left based on the circumstantial evidence. That was the conclusion that we made."

As for the allegation that agents of the Russian state were responsible for this Schrödinger's hack, Henry simply told the Intelligence Committee what he "believed" to be the case.

"There are other nation-states that collect this type of intelligence for sure," he said, "but the—what we would call the tactics and techniques were consistent with what we'd seen associated with the Russian state."

CrowdStrike's internal investigation "saw activity that we believed was consistent with activity we'd seen previously and had associated with the Russian Government."

CrowdStrike has multiple ties to pro-Democratic Party sections of the US elite, hellbent on an aggressive confrontation with Russia.

Before joining the company, Henry himself was an executive assistant director at the FBI while Mueller was director. CrowdStrike's co-founder Dmitri Alperovitch is a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, a leading think-tank for American imperialism. And, as Maté reports, the declassified testimony confirms that the company was hired to investigate the DNC data breach by Michael Sussman, a lawyer at Perkins Coie. The same law firm, with ties to the Democratic Party, hired intelligence company Fusion GPS to produce the infamous Steele dossier—a collection of uncorroborated gossip alleging Trump's connections with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In 2016, CrowdStrike wrongly accused Russia of hacking into Ukrainian military technology.

FBI Director James Comey nevertheless described the company as "highly respected" in his testimony to the Mueller investigation. While CrowdStrike was carrying out its investigation into the DNC breach, the FBI did not look too closely at its work. Director James Comey told Congress in 2017, that the Bureau "never got direct access to the [DNC] machines themselves."

CrowdStrike, he continued, "shared with us their forensics from their review of the system."

From Henry's testimony, however, it is clear that CrowdStrike were allowed to be selective with the information they shared. According to him, the company provided the FBI with "a couple of actual digital images" out of "in excess of ten, I think." Otherwise, CrowdStrike simply provided their own evaluations—"the results of our analysis based on what our technology went out and collected."

Consortium ~~Nast~~ ~~reports~~ ~~on~~ exchange between Trump ally Roger Stone and the Justice Department. Their communications revealed that CrowdStrike never provided the FBI with a final forensic report for its investigation, only three redacted drafts.



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