

Durham report shows Democrats fabricated anti-Russia intelligence during 2016 elections

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19 May 2023

On May 16, Special Counsel John Durham released a lengthy report on the Justice Department's four-year investigation into charges by Donald Trump that a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) probe into allegations that his 2016 election campaign had ties to the Russian government was part of a "deep state" plot against him.

Durham's 306-page document, entitled "Report on Matters Related to Intelligence Activities and Investigations Arising Out of the 2016 Presidential Campaigns," presents an extensive review of the FBI's Crossfire Hurricane investigation into the Trump campaign that began on July 31, 2016.

Although the Durham report does not explicitly say so, the information contained within it exposes the failed effort mounted by the Democratic Party and its candidate Hillary Clinton, in collaboration with top level officials at the FBI, to win the 2016 presidential election by fabricating intelligence that Donald Trump was colluding with the Russian regime of Vladimir Putin.

The report demonstrates once again that the primary conflict between the Democratic Party and the Trump-dominated Republican Party has been over foreign policy. The present war in Ukraine against Russia, instigated by the Biden administration in alliance with NATO countries, has been central to the global political strategy pursued by the Democratic Party for more than a decade.

Durham—a Republican with decades of service as an attorney for the state of Connecticut and the federal government—was originally selected by then-attorney general William Barr in April 2019 to investigate whether the intelligence gathering involving the Trump campaign was "lawful and appropriate."

In December 2020, after Trump lost to Biden, Barr disclosed that he had appointed Durham as special counsel in October, ensuring that the investigation would continue after Trump left the White House.

The Durham report was submitted to Attorney General Merrick Garland on May 12 along with a 29-page classified appendix that was not released to the public. Garland publicly released the main report without comment or redaction.

In the Executive Summary, the report states that the FBI's counterintelligence probe of the Republican candidate for president was initiated by top bureau officials, including

Deputy Director Andrew McCabe and Deputy Assistant Director for Counterintelligence Peter Strzok, even though "the government possessed no verified intelligence reflecting that Trump or the Trump campaign was involved in a conspiracy or collaborative relationship with officials of the Russian government."

Referring to previous government investigations into allegations of Russian interference in the 2016 elections—such as the Mueller Report of March 2019 and the Senate Intelligence Committee's Russia Report of August 2020—the Durham report states that there is a "substantial body of information" concerning Trump's dealings with Russian businesses and officials.

The report states further that "based on the evidence gathered in the multiple exhaustive and costly federal investigations of these matters, including the instant investigation, neither U.S. law enforcement nor the Intelligence Community appears to have possessed any actual evidence of collusion in their holdings at the commencement of the Crossfire Hurricane investigation."

An example of the "raw, unanalyzed, and uncorroborated intelligence" used by the FBI to investigate individuals in the Trump campaign such as George Papadopoulos, Carter Page, Paul Manafort and Michael Flynn, including secret electronic surveillance of them, was what became known as the Steele Dossier.

The Durham report says that the Perkins Coie law firm, "acting as counsel to the Clinton campaign," entered into a consulting agreement with Fusion GPS, a political investigative firm, to conduct opposition research on the Trump campaign.

The report states: "In mid-May 2016, Glenn Simpson of Fusion GPS met with Steele in the United Kingdom and subsequently retained Steele and his firm, Orbis Business Intelligence ('Orbis'), to investigate Trump's ties to Russia."

While claiming he was a former UK intelligence official, Steele was also at that time a confidential informant for the FBI, who, in July 2016, began to supply the agency with reports "concerning Trump's purported ties to Russia."

Among the information in the Steele reports was an allegation that there was a "well developed conspiracy of co-operation" between Trump, his campaign and senior Russian officials.

This information, which was never verified, was then used to pursue secret surveillance of the Trump campaign officials.

Significantly, FBI Crossfire Hurricane investigators received the Steele reports in September 2016, less than two months before the presidential election. They used the information to submit Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) applications seeking approval to secretly spy on Carter Page.

Revealing something of the political motivation behind the effort to tie Trump to the Russian government, the FISA application stated that there was a “well-developed conspiracy of cooperation” between the two, based on “a mutual interest in defeating Democratic presidential candidate Hillary CLINTON, whom President PUTIN apparently both hated and feared.”

The Durham report says that the “primary sub source” of the content of the Steele Dossier was determined by the FBI to be Igor Danchenko, a U.S.-based Russian national. When Danchenko was interviewed by the FBI in January 2017, he could not corroborate any of the allegations in the Steele reports. Instead, the Durham report says, “Danchenko characterized the information he provided to Steele as ‘rumor and speculation’ and the product of casual conversation.”

In the concluding section of the Executive Summary, the Durham report criticizes the FBI for “a serious lack of analytical rigor towards the information that they received, especially information received from politically affiliated persons and entities.” It then goes on to state, without referring to the Clinton campaign or the Democratic Party, “In particular, there was significant reliance on investigative leads provided or funded (directly or indirectly) by Trump’s political opponents.”

In other words, the false information used by the FBI to mount an investigation of the Trump campaign for collusion with the Russian government originated with people who were funded by the Democratic Party and the Clinton 2016 election campaign.

In a lengthy subsection of part IV of the document, entitled “Investigating Referral of Possible Clinton Campaign Plan,” the Durham report states: “According to his handwritten notes, CIA Director Brennan subsequently briefed President Obama and other senior national security officials on the intelligence, including the ‘alleged approval by Hillary Clinton on July 26, 2016 of a proposal from one of her foreign policy advisors to vilify Donald Trump by stirring up a scandal claiming interference by Russian security services.’”

For his own reasons, as a representative of the criminal justice system, Durham offers up a series of suggestions about the “need for the FBI and the Department to recognize that lack of analytical rigor, apparent confirmation bias, and an over-willingness to rely on information from individuals connected to political opponents caused investigators to fail to adequately consider alternative hypotheses and to act without appropriate objectivity or restraint in pursuing allegations of collusion or conspiracy between a U.S. political campaign and a foreign

power.”

The Durham report by and large accepts the unsubstantiated and unproven claims of Russian interference in the 2016 election. On this question, which was a critical element of the buildup for the war in Ukraine, a majority of the American political establishment is in agreement.

In the end, the Durham investigation secured only one guilty plea, from Kevin Clinesmith, for falsifying information in a FISA application for spying on Carter Page. It also resulted in a probation sentence for a charge unrelated to the origins of the Russia investigation, and two unsuccessful trial prosecutions. Durham claimed at the two trials that the FBI had been deceived by the defendants.

The Democratic- and Republican-aligned corporate media in the U.S. has responded to the Durham report in an entirely predictable manner. The *Wall Street Journal* published a series of articles that feigned shock at the presence of political influence within the intelligence and law enforcement establishment. This is coming from a publication that is directly involved in encouraging fascist and far-right political forces within the police and the state apparatus.

The New York Times published a news article on May 15 saying that “the special counsel’s final report nevertheless did not produce blockbuster revelations of politically motivated misconduct,” and a news analysis that states: “Mr. Durham delivered a report that scolded the F.B.I. but failed to live up to the expectations of supporters of Donald J. Trump that he would uncover a politically motivated ‘deep state’ conspiracy.”



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