

VIPS Fault Mueller Probe, Criticize Refusal to Interview Assange

The bug in Mueller's report released on Thursday is that he accepts that the Russian government interfered in the election. Trump should challenge that, says VIPS.



MEMORANDUM FOR: The President

FROM: Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS)

SUBJECT: The Fly in the Mueller Ointment

April 16, 2019

Mr. President:

The song has ended but the melody lingers on. The release Thursday of the redacted text of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's "Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election" nudged the American people a tad closer to the truth on so-called

“Russiagate.”

But the Mueller report left unscathed the central-but-unproven allegation that the Russian government hacked into the DNC and Podesta emails, gave them to *WikiLeaks* to publish, and helped you win the election. The thrust will be the same; namely, even if there is a lack of evidence that you colluded with Russian President Vladimir Putin, you have him to thank for becoming president. And that melody will linger on for the rest of your presidency, unless you seize the moment.

Mueller has accepted that central-but-unproven allegation as gospel truth, apparently in the lack of any disinterested, independent forensic work. Following the odd example of his erstwhile colleague, former FBI Director James Comey, Mueller apparently has relied for forensics on a discredited, DNC-hired firm named CrowdStrike, whose credibility is on a par with “pee-tape dossier” compiler Christopher Steele. Like Steele, CrowdStrike was hired and paid by the DNC (through a cutout).

We brought the lack of independent forensics to the attention of Attorney General William Barr on March 13 in a [Memorandum](#) entitled “Mueller’s Forensic-Free Findings”, but received no reply or acknowledgement. In that Memorandum we described the results of our own independent, agenda-free forensic investigation led by two former Technical Directors of the NSA, who avoid squishy “assessments,” preferring to base their findings on fundamental principles of science and the scientific method. Our findings remain unchallenged; they reveal gaping holes in CrowdStrike’s conclusions.

We do not know if Barr shared our March 13 Memorandum with you. As for taking a public position on the forensics issue, we suspect he is being circumspect in choosing his battles carefully, perhaps deferring until later a rigorous examination of the dubious technical work upon which Mueller seems to have relied.

Barr's Notification to Congress

As you know, the big attention-getter came on March 24 when Attorney General William Barr included in his four-page summary a quote from Mueller's report: "The investigation did not establish that members of the Trump campaign conspired or coordinated with the Russian government in its election interference activities." Understandably, that grabbed headlines – the more so, since most Americans had been convinced earlier by the media that the opposite was true.

There remains, however, a huge fly in the ointment. The Mueller report makes it clear that Mueller accepts as a given – an evidence-impoverished given – that the Russian government interfered in the election on two tracks:

Track 1 involves what Barr, echoing Mueller, claims "a Russian organization, the Internet Research Agency (IRA)" did in using social media "to sow social discord, eventually with the aim of interfering with the election." A careful look at this allegation shows it to be without merit, despite Herculean efforts by *The New York Times*, for example, to put lipstick on this particular pig. After some rudimentary research, award winning investigative reporter Gareth Porter promptly put that pig out of its misery and

brought home the bacon. We do not believe “Track 1” merits further commentary.

Track 2 does need informed commentary, since it is more technical and – to most Americans – arcane. In Barr’s words: “The Special Counsel found that Russian government actors successfully hacked into computers and obtained emails from persons affiliated with the Clinton campaign and Democratic Party organizations, and publicly disseminated those materials through various intermediaries, including *WikiLeaks*. Based on these activities, the Special Counsel brought criminal charges against a number of Russian military officers for conspiring to hack into computers in the United States for purposes of influencing the election.”

We are eager to see if Mueller’s report contains more persuasive forensic evidence than that which VIPS has already debunked. In Barr’s summary, the only mention of forensics refers to “forensic accountants” – a far cry from the kind of forensic investigators needed to provide convincing proof of “hacking” by the Russian government.

But They Were Indicted!

Circular reasoning is not likely to work for very long, even with a U.S. populace used to being brainwashed by the media. Many Americans had mistakenly assumed that Mueller’s indictment of Russians – whether they be posting on FaceBook or acting like intelligence officers – was proof of guilt. But, as lawyers regularly point out, “one can easily indict a ham sandwich” – easier still these days, if it comes with Russian dressing.

Chances have now increased that the gullible folks who had

been assured that Mueller would find collusion between you and Putin may now be a bit more circumspect – skeptical even – regarding the rest of the story-line of the “Russian hack,” and that will be even more likely among those with some technical background. Such specialists will have a field day, IF – and it is a capital “IF” – by some miracle, word of VIPS’ forensic findings gets into the media this time around.

The evidence-impooverished, misleadingly labeled “Intelligence Community Assessment” of January 6, 2017 had one saving grace. The authors noted: “The nature of cyberspace makes attribution of cyber operations difficult but not impossible. Every kind of cyber operation – malicious or not – leaves a trail.” Forensic investigators can follow a trail of metadata and other technical properties. VIPS has done that.

A “High-Class Entity?”

If, as we strongly suspect, Mueller is relying for forensics solely on CrowdStrike, the discredited firm hired by the DNC in the spring of 2016, he is acting more in the mold of Inspector Clouseau than the crackerjack investigator he is reputed to be. It simply does not suffice for Mueller’s former colleague James Comey to tell Congress that CrowdStrike is a “high-class entity.” It is nothing of the sort and, in addition to its documented incompetence, it is riddled with conflicts of interest. Comey needs to explain why he kept the FBI away from the DNC computers after they were said to have been “hacked.”

And former National Intelligence Director James Clapper

needs to explain his claim last November that “the forensic evidence was overwhelming about what the Russians had done.” What forensic evidence? From CrowdStrike? We at VIPS, in contrast, are finding more and more forensic evidence that the DNC emails were leaked, not hacked by the Russians or anyone else – and that “Guccifer 2.0” is an out-and-out fraud. Yes, we can prove that from forensics too.

But the Talking Heads Say ...

Again, if Mueller’s incomplete investigation is allowed to assume the status of Holy Writ, most Americans will continue to believe that – whether you colluded the Russians or not – Putin came through for you big time. In short, absent President Putin’s help, you would not be president.

Far too many Americans will still believe this because of the mainstream-media fodder – half-cooked by intelligence leaks – that they have been fed for two and a half years. The media have been playing *the* central role in the effort of the MICIMATT (the Military-Industrial-Congressional-Intelligence-Media-Academia-Think-Tank) complex to stymie any improvement in relations with Russia. We in VIPS have repeatedly demonstrated that the core charges of Russian interference in the 2016 election are built on a house of cards. But, despite our record of accuracy on this issue – not to mention our pre-Iraq-war warnings about the fraudulent intelligence served up by our former colleagues – we have gotten no play in mainstream media.

Most of us have chalked up decades in the intelligence business and many have extensive academic and government experience focusing on Russia. We consider the issue of

“Russian interference” of overriding significance not only because the allegation is mischievously bogus and easily disproven. More important, it has brought tension with nuclear-armed Russia to the kind of dangerous fever pitch not seen since the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, when the Russian provocation was real – authentic, not synthetic.

Sober minds resolved that crisis more than a half-century ago, and we all got to live another day. These days sober minds seem few and far between and a great deal is at stake. On the intelligence/forensics side, we have proved that the evidence adduced to “prove” that the Russians hacked into the DNC and Podesta emails and gave them to *WikiLeaks* is spurious. For example, we have examined metadata from one key document attributed to Russian hacking and shown that it was synthetically tainted with “Russian fingerprints.”

Who Left the Bread Crumbs?

So, if it wasn't the Russians, who left the “Russian” breadcrumb “fingerprints?” We do not know for sure; on this question we cannot draw a conclusion based on the principles of science – at least not yet. We suspect, however, that cyber warriors closer to home were responsible for inserting the “tell-tale signs” necessary to attribute “hacks” to Russia. We tacked on our more speculative views regarding this intriguing issue onto the end of our July 24, 2017 [Memorandum](#) to you entitled “Intelligence Veterans Challenge Russia Hack Evidence.”

We recall that you were apprised of that Memorandum's key findings because you ordered then-CIA Director Mike Pompeo to talk to William Binney, one of our two former NSA

Technical Directors and one of the principal authors of that Memorandum. On October 24, 2017, Pompeo began an hour-long meeting with Binney by explaining the genesis of the odd invitation to CIA Headquarters: "You are here because the president told me that if I really wanted to know about Russian hacking I needed to talk to you."

On the chance Pompeo has given you no report on his meeting with Binney, we can tell you that Binney, a plain-spoken, widely respected scientist, began by telling Pompeo that his (CIA) people were lying to him about Russian hacking and that he (Binney) could prove it. Pompeo reacted with disbelief, but then talked of following up with the FBI and NSA. We have no sign, though, that he followed through. And there is good reason to believe that Pompeo himself may have been reluctant to follow up with his subordinates in the Directorate of Digital Innovation created by CIA Director John Brennan in 2015. CIA malware and hacking tools are built by the Engineering Development Group, part of that relatively new Directorate.

'Obfuscation'

A leak from within the CIA, published on March 31, 2017 by *WikiLeaks* as part of the so-called "Vault 7" disclosures, exposed a cyber tool called "Marble," which was used during 2016 for "obfuscation" (CIA's word). This tool can be used to conduct a forensic attribution double game (aka a false-flag operation); it included test samples in Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Korean, and Russian. *Washington Post* reporter Ellen Nakashima, to her credit, immediately penned an informative article on the Marble cyber-tool, under the catching (and accurate) headline "WikiLeaks' latest release

of CIA cyber-tools could blow the cover on agency hacking operations.” That was apparently before Nakashima “got the memo.” Mainstream media have otherwise avoided like the plague any mention of Marble.

Mr. President, we do not know if CIA’s Marble, or tools like it, played some kind of role in the campaign to blame Russia for hacking the DNC. Nor do we know how candid the denizens of CIA’s Directorate of Digital Innovation have been with the White House – or with former Director Pompeo – on this touchy issue. Since it is still quite relevant, we will repeat below a paragraph included in our July 2017 Memorandum to you under the sub-heading “Putin and the Technology:”

“We also do not know if you have discussed cyber issues in any detail with President Putin. In his interview with NBC’s Megyn Kelly, he seemed quite willing – perhaps even eager – to address issues related to the kind of cyber tools revealed in the Vault 7 disclosures, if only to indicate he has been briefed on them. Putin pointed out that today’s technology enables hacking to be “masked and camouflaged to an extent that no one can understand the origin” [of the hack] ... And, vice versa, it is possible to set up any entity or any individual that everyone will think that they are the exact source of that attack. Hackers may be anywhere,” he said. “There may be hackers, by the way, in the United States who very craftily and professionally passed the buck to Russia. Can’t you imagine such a scenario? ... I can.”

As we told Attorney General Barr five weeks ago, we consider

Mueller's findings fundamentally flawed on the forensics side and *ipso facto* incomplete. We also criticized Mueller for failing to interview willing witnesses with direct knowledge, like *WikiLeaks'* Julian Assange.

Political Enemies & Mainstream Media (Forgive the Redundancy)

You may be unaware that in March 2017 lawyers for Assange and the Justice Department (acting on behalf of the CIA) reportedly were very close to an agreement under which Assange would agree to discuss "technical evidence ruling out certain parties" in the leak of the DNC emails and agree to redact some classified CIA information, in exchange for limited immunity. According to the investigative reporter John Solomon of *The Hill*, Sen. Mark Warner, (D-VA) vice chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, learned of the incipient deal and told then-FBI Director Comey, who ordered an abrupt "stand down" and an end to the discussions with Assange.

Why did Comey and Warner put the kibosh on receiving "technical evidence ruling out certain parties" [read Russia]? We won't insult you with the obvious answer. Assange is now in prison, to the delight of so many – including Mrs. Clinton who has said Assange must now "answer for what he has done."

But is it too late to follow up somehow on Assange's offer? Might he or his associates be still willing to provide "technical evidence" showing, at least, who was *not* the culprit?

You, Mr. President, could cause that to happen. You would

have to buck strong resistance at every turn, and there all manner of ways that those with vested interests and a lot of practice in sabotage can try to thwart you – with the full cooperation of most media pundits. By now, you know all too well how that works.

But you are the president. And there may be no better time than now to face them down, show the spurious nature of the concocted “evidence” attempting to put you in “Putin’s pocket,” and – not least – lift the cloud that has prevented you from pursuing a more decent relationship with Russia.

For the Steering Group, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity

William Binney, former Technical Director, World Geopolitical & Military Analysis, NSA; co-founder, SIGINT Automation Research Center (ret.)

Bogdan Dzakovic, former Team Leader of Federal Air Marshals and Red Team, FAA Security (ret.) (associate VIPS)

Philip Giraldi, CIA, Operations Officer (ret.)

Mike Gravel, former Adjutant, top secret control officer, Communications Intelligence Service; special agent of the Counter Intelligence Corps and former United States Senator

James George Jatras, former U.S. diplomat and former foreign policy adviser to Senate leadership (Associate VIPS)

Larry Johnson, former CIA Intelligence Officer & former State Department Counter-Terrorism Official, (ret.)

Michael S. Kearns, Captain, USAF (ret.); ex-Master SERE Instructor for Strategic Reconnaissance Operations (NSA/DIA)

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John Kiriakou, former CIA Counterterrorism Officer and former Senior Investigator, Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Karen Kwiatkowski, former Lt. Col., US Air Force (ret.), at Office of Secretary of Defense watching the manufacture of lies on Iraq, 2001-2003

Clement J. Laniewski, LTC, U.S. Army (ret.)

Linda Lewis, WMD preparedness policy analyst, USDA (ret.)

Edward Loomis, NSA Cryptologic Computer Scientist (ret.)

David MacMichael, former Senior Estimates Officer, National Intelligence Council (ret.)

Ray McGovern, former US Army infantry/intelligence officer & CIA presidential briefer (ret.)

Elizabeth Murray, former Deputy National Intelligence Officer for the Near East & CIA political analyst (ret.)

Todd E. Pierce, MAJ, US Army Judge Advocate (ret.)

Peter Van Buren, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Service Officer (ret.) (associate VIPS)

Robert Wing, U.S. Department of State, Foreign Service Officer (former) (associate VIPS)

Ann Wright, U.S. Army Reserve Colonel (ret) and former U.S. Diplomat who resigned in 2003 in opposition to the Iraq War
