

Orwellian Cloud Hovers Over Russia-gate

Ray McGovern calls out the void of evidence at the heart of the Senate hearing with Attorney General Barr on Wednesday.

By [Ray McGovern](#)

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George Orwell would have been in stitches Wednesday watching Attorney General William Barr and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee spar on Russia-gate. The hearing had the hallmarks of the intentionally or naively blind leading the blind with political shamelessness.

From time to time the discussion turned to the absence of a legal “predicate” to investigate President Donald Trump for colluding with Russia. That is, of course, important; and we can expect to hear a lot more about that in coming months.

More important: what remains unacknowledged is the absence of an evidence-based major premise that should have been in place to anchor the rhetoric and accusations about Russia-gate over the past three years. With a lack of evidence sufficient to support a major premise, any syllogism falls of its own weight.

The major premise that Russia hacked into the Democratic National Committee and gave *WikiLeaks* highly embarrassing emails cannot bear close scrutiny. Yes, former CIA Director John Brennan has told Congress he does not “do evidence.” In the same odd vein, Brennan’s former FBI counterpart James Comey chose not to “do evidence” when he failed to seize and

inspect the DNC computers that a contractor-of-ill-repute working for the DNC claimed were hacked by Russia.

Call us old fashioned, but we Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) still “do evidence” – and, in the case at hand, forensic investigation. For those who “can handle the truth,” the two former NSA technical directors in VIPS can readily explain how the DNC emails were not hacked – by Russia or anyone else – but rather were copied and leaked by someone with physical access to the DNC computers.

We first reported hard forensic evidence to support that judgment in a July 2017 memorandum for the president. Substantial evidence that has accumulated since then strengthens our confidence in that and in related conclusions. Our conclusions are not based on squishy “assessments,” but rather on empirical, forensic investigations – evidence based on fundamental principles of science and the scientific method.

Bizarre, Medieval

All “serious” members of the establishment, including Barr, his Senate interrogators, and the “mainstream media” feel required to accept as dogma the evidence-free conventional wisdom that Russia hacked into the DNC. If you question it, you are, *ipso facto*, a heretic – and a “conspiracy theorist,” to boot.

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Again, shades of Orwell and his famous “two plus two equals

five.” Orwell’s protagonist in “1984,” Winston Smith, imagines that the State might proclaim that “two plus two equals five” is fact. Smith wonders whether, if everybody believes it, does that make it true?

Actually, the end goal is not to get you to parrot that two plus two equals five. The end goal is to make it so you’d never even consider that two plus two could equal anything other than five.

During the entire Barr testimony Wednesday, no one departed from the safe, conventional wisdom about Russian hacking. We in VIPS, at least, resist the notion that this makes it true. We shall continue to insist that two and two is four, and point out the flaws in any squishy “Intelligence Community Assessment” that concludes, even “with high confidence,” that the required answer is “five.”

Doubtful Dogma

Wednesday’s Senate hearing brought a painful flashback to a similarly widely-held, but evidence-free dogma – that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction before the U.S. attacked that country. It gets worse: Many of the same people who promoted the spurious claims about WMD are responsible for developing and proclaiming the dogma about Russian hacking into the DNC. The Oscar for his performance in the role of misleader goes, once again, to former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, whose “credits” go back to the WMD fiasco in which he played a central role.

Before the war on Iraq, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld put Clapper in charge of analysis of satellite imagery, the most definitive collection system for information on WMD.

In his memoir, Clapper admits, with stomach-churning nonchalance, that *“intelligence officers, including me, were so eager to help [spread the Cheney/Bush claim that Iraq had a ‘rogue WMD program’] that we found what wasn’t really there.”* [Emphasis added]

Last November as Clapper was hawking his memoir at the Carnegie Endowment I had a chance during the Q and A to pursue him on that and on Russia-gate. I began:

“You confess [in Clapper’s book] to having been shocked that no weapons of mass destruction were found. And then, to your credit, you admit, as you say here [quoting from the book], ‘the blame is due to intelligence officers, including me, who were so eager to help [the administration make war on Iraq] that we found what wasn’t really there.’”

“Now fast forward to two years ago. Your superiors were hell bent on finding ways to blame Trump’s victory on the Russians. Do you think that your efforts were guilty of the same sin here? Do you think that you found a lot of things that weren’t really there? Because that’s what our conclusion is, especially from the technical end. There was no hacking of the DNC; it was leaked, and you know that because you talked to NSA.”

Evidence

Back to the Senate hearing on Wednesday: Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA), during a line of questioning about evidence of obstruction of justice, asked the attorney general if he personally reviewed the underlying evidence in the Mueller report.

“No,” said Barr, “We accepted the statements in the report as factual record. We did not go underneath it to see whether or not they were accurate. We accepted it as accurate.”

Harris: You accepted the report as evidence? You did not question or look at the underlying evidence?

Barr: We accepted the statements in the report and the characterization of the evidence as true.”

Harris: “You have made it clear that you did not look at the evidence.”

It was crystal clear on Wednesday that Barr had bigger fish to fry, as well as protective nets to deflect incoming shells. He is likely to be preoccupied for weeks answering endless questions about his handling of the Mueller report. It is altogether possible, though, that in due course he plans to look into the origins of Russia-gate and the role of Clapper, Brennan and Comey in creating and promoting the evidence-free dogma that Russia hacked into the DNC – and, more broadly, that, absent Russia’s support, Trump would not be president.

For the moment, however, we shall have to live with “The Russians Still Did It, Whether Trump Colluded or Not.” There remains an outside chance, however, that the truth will emerge, perhaps even before November 2020, and that, this time, the Democrats will be shown to have shot themselves in *both* feet.

For further background, please see:

[VIPS Fault Mueller Probe, Criticize Refusal to Interview](#)

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VIPS: Mueller's Forensics-Free Findings

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