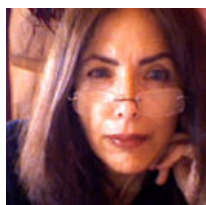


Russia-gate as Count Dracula

Ann Garrison reviews Stephen F. Cohen's book, "War with Russia? From Putin & Ukraine to Trump & Russiagate."

By **Ann Garrison**

Special to Consortium News

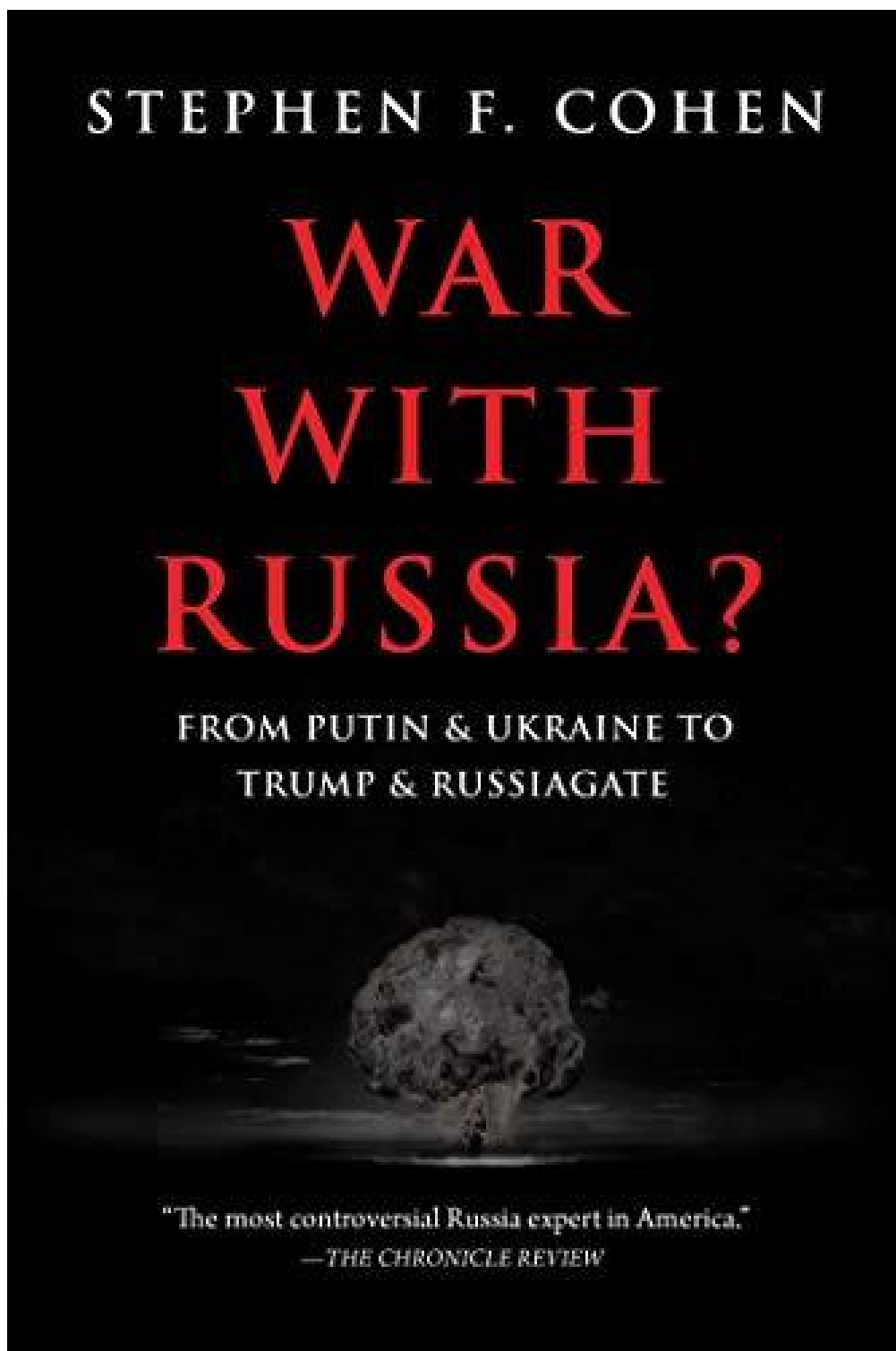


"Russiagate, like Count Dracula, will never end because new political blood will be fed to this vampire . . . The Russiagate fable – fraud – has become a kind of theocratic cult, and it has millions and millions and millions of self-interested and unwitting followers."

That was Stephen F. Cohen's comment after Special Counsel Robert Mueller concluded that there was no evidence to convict President Donald Trump or any of his campaign staff of colluding with Russia to steal the 2016 presidential election. He was speaking to nationally syndicated radio host John Batchelor

in one of their broadcasts on Radio WABC-AM, New York City, which have been [archived](#) on the website of *The Nation* for the past five years.

Now, a month later, Democratic elites are still roaming the streets of Washington and the Halls of Congress in search of fresh blood. On May 16, [The Washington Post](#) reported that



House Democrats had begun a marathon public reading of the "Mueller Report" for citizens who don't have time to read the whole thing but might listen to the audio. There's no there there, but they won't let go. Are they serious? Or just mortified, like most vampires, by the light of day? Whichever, they're likely to lose again in 2020, because poll after poll says that Americans don't care; Russia-gate is nowhere near the top of their list of concerns.

Cohen is Russian studies professor emeritus at Princeton and NYU. His latest book, "War with Russia? From Putin & Ukraine to Trump & Russiagate," is a series of essays published in *The Nation* and text elaborations of the radio broadcasts.

Cohen says that Russia-gate has deeply damaged at least four U.S. institutions: the electoral system; the presidency; the "intelligence community;" and the media, meaning most of all the influential "legacy" media; *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the major television and cable news networks. Whichever side of the partisan divide they're on, Americans know they've been lied to by one or more of them. Will they find reason to widely trust any of these institutions again? Will any Washington officials and their staffers, and their allied power brokers and intelligence agents, trust any others from here on?

The Democrats, he says, have created a permanent excuse for failure: "the Russians did it." And what's to keep the Republicans from using the same excuse for their own electoral failures? Or to keep dangerous tension between the U.S. and Russia, the world's two greatest nuclear powers, from ratcheting up all the while?

“War with Russia?” analyzes where we are, how we got here, and where we can go if U.S.-driven military escalation between the U.S. and Russia doesn’t lead to nuclear apocalypse. Cohen still believes that there are options as long as there is human agency, as he wrote in [“Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938.”](#)

Lost Prominence

That book, published in 1973, made him a prominent voice in both U.S. and Soviet politics until his dissidence about the New Cold War, then Russia-gate, made him persona non grata at *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the network news outlets where he had previously been a welcome commentator.

Since Russia-gate was “ginned up,” as Cohen puts it, he has even been attacked by fellow *Nation* writers. Katrina vanden Heuvel, editorial director of *The Nation* and Cohen’s wife, has, to her credit, defended him, despite [their own disagreements](#) about the Mueller investigation. She opposes the new McCarthyism, but she has said that the investigation is worthwhile insofar as it reveals the corruption of Trump and friends.

Cohen has said that politicians are corrupt – Democrat, Republican and Russian – and that the central reality of the Mueller investigation is its dangerous escalation of U.S.-Russian tensions. He has often said that he doesn’t like Trump, but that Trump is the president we’ve got, for two more years or even six, so any moves he makes toward détente with Russia or military de-escalation anywhere else in the world should be encouraged.

In the introduction to “War with Russia?,” Cohen writes: “The book would not have been possible in any way without the support of my wife. Whatever her own opinions, no matter the external pressures, Katrina posted every commentary I wrote.”

Again, kudos to Katrina vanden Heuvel, but the fact that Cohen’s critique of Russia-gate has stirred such anger even at *The Nation*, the publication that led the opposition to McCarthyism in the 1950s, is evidence of how much ground Russia-gate has gained, even among liberal progressives.

Cohen and Batchelor readily acknowledge their differences as well –Cohen a liberal progressive, Batchelor a libertarian conservative – but they agree on the dangerous folly of the New Cold War. After a lifetime of scholarship and engagement in Russian history, Cohen says that the current state of U.S.-Russian relations is more perilous than any moments of the First Cold War, including the Cuban Missile Crisis. Indeed, one of his concerns is that Trump has been so fraudulently vilified as a puppet of Russian President Vladimir Putin that he may be politically unable to defuse another precipitous confrontation like the Cuban Missile Crisis. Irrational and terrifying as the anti-Communist Red Scare of the 1950s was, he writes, it never led to the claim that a U.S. president was the puppet of a foreign government or that there’s been a silent coup leaving the White House in its clutches.

Wikileaks

In February 2017, in a chapter titled “Kremlin-Baiting President Trump,” Cohen writes:

"But the crux of pro-Kremlin allegations against Trump was, and remains, the charge that Putin hacked the DNC and disseminated the stolen emails through WikiLeaks in order to put Trump in the White House. A summary of these 'facts' was presented in the declassified report [the Steele Dossier] released by the US 'intelligence community' and widely published in January 2017.

"Not addressed [in the report] is the point made by a number of American hacking experts that Russian state hackers would have left no fingerprints, as US intelligence claimed they had. Indeed, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity believe that the damaging DNC documents were not hacked but leaked by an insider. If so, it had nothing to do with Russia. (The NSA, which has the capacity to monitor the movement of emails, was only 'moderately confident' in the report it co-signed, while the CIA and FBI were 'highly confident,' even though the FBI inexplicably never examined the DNC computers.) [Later, Cohen said that a source had told him that, in NSA parlance, "moderately confident" means they don't know.]

"There is another incongruity. At his final presidential press conference, Obama referred to the DNC scandal as a leak, not a hack, and said he did not know how the emails got to WikiLeaks—this despite allegations by his own intelligence agencies. (No one seems to have asked Obama if he misspoke!) On the other side of this alleged conspiracy, nor is it clear that Putin so favored the clearly erratic Trump that he would have taken such a risk, which if discovered, as I also pointed out earlier,

would have compromised Trump and greatly favored Clinton. (Judging from discussions in Kremlin-related Russian newspapers, there was a serious debate as to which American presidential candidate might be best—or least bad—for Russia.)”

In a May 8 broadcast with Batchelor, Cohen said even more adamantly that Mueller’s a priori assumption that Russians hacked into the DNC emails, his failure to undertake his own forensic investigation, and his failure to interview Bill Binney, a former technical director at the National Security Agency, and Julian Assange himself, should be enough to discredit the whole report.

Amen, and I hope these highlights recommend the book. It’s a page-turner.

Ann Garrison is an independent journalist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2014, she received the Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza Democracy and Peace Prize for her reporting on conflict in the African Great Lakes Region. She can be reached at ann@anngarrison.com.

Russia-gate’s Monstrous Offspring

Russia-gate has shed any premise of being about Russian interference, writes Daniel Lazare, but the idea that America may in anyway be responsible for its own fate is of course unthinkable.

By Daniel Lazare

Special to Consortium News



Americans used to think that Russia-gate was about a plot to hack the 2016 election. They were wrong. Russia-gate is really about an immense conspiracy to do four things:

No. 1: Ratchet up tensions with Russia to ever more dangerous levels;

No. 2: Show that Democrats are even more useless than people imagined;

No. 3: Persecute Julian Assange;

No. 4: Re-elect Donald Trump as president.

This was the takeaway from Mitch McConnell's devastating "case closed" speech last week in which the Senate majority leader jeered at President Barack Obama for mocking Mitt Romney's claim (seven years ago now) that Russia was America's "number one geopolitical foe." As Obama famously replied during that presidential debate: "The 1980s are now calling to ask for their foreign policy back because the Cold War's been over for 20 years."

But that was so 2012. Now, says McConnell, it looks like Romney was right:

"We'd have been better off if the administration hadn't swept [Russian President Vladimir] Putin's invasion and occupation of Georgia under the rug or looked away as Russia forced out western NGO's and cracked down on civil society. If President Obama hadn't let Assad trample his red line in Syria or embraced Putin's fake deal on chemical weapons, if the Obama administration had

responded firmly to Putin's invasion and occupation of Ukraine in 2014, to the assassination of Boris Nemtsov in 2015, and to Russia intervention in Syria – maybe stronger leadership would have left the Kremlin less emboldened, maybe tampering with our democracy wouldn't have seemed so very tempting.

“Instead,” McConnell went on, “the previous administration sent the Kremlin a signal they could get away with almost anything, almost anything. So is it surprising that we got the brazen interference detailed in special counsel Mueller's report?”

Lies and Distortions

Like so much out of Congress these days, this was a farrago of lies and distortions. It wasn't Moscow that started the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, but Tbilisi. While Russia has indeed cracked down on U.S.-backed NGO's, Washington has done the same by forcing Russia's highly successful news agency RT to register as a foreign agent and by sentencing Maria Butina, a Russian national studying at American University, to 18 months in prison for the crime of hobnobbing with members of the National Rifle Association. The charge that Syrian President Bashar al Assad “trampled” Obama's red line by using chemical weapons is hardly as clear-cut as imperial propagandists like to believe – to say the least – while the agreement between Putin and former Secretary of State John Kerry to rid Syria of chemical weapons was not fake at all, but an example, increasingly rare unfortunately, of diplomacy being used to prevent an international crisis from getting out of hand.

And so on ad nauseum. But what could Democrats say in response given that they've spent the last three years trying to out-hawk the GOP? Answer: nothing. All they could do was try to turn tables on McConnell by charging him with not being anti-Russian enough. Thus, New York's Sen. Chuck Schumer accused him of "[aiding and abetting](#)" Moscow while Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin [accused](#) him of running interference for Putin because he "feels the Russians were on the side of the Republicans in 2016 and just might be again in 2020."

Democrats Feed the Super Hawks

The result: a Democratic consensus that Russia can't be trusted and that America must put itself on a war footing to prevent Putin from "toppl[ing] the mighty oak that has been our republic for two hundred years," as Schumer put it. It's an across-the-board agreement that the long-awaited Mueller report has only strengthened by regurgitating the intelligence-community line that "[t]he Russian government interfered in the 2016 presidential election in sweeping and systematic fashion" and then cherry-picking the facts to fit its preconceived thesis. (See "[Top Ten Questions About the Mueller Report](#)," May 6.)

Democrats claim to oppose National Security Advisor John Bolton, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Vice President Mike Pence, but the anti-Russian hysteria they promote strengthens the hand of such super-hawks. It makes military conflict more likely, if not with Russia then with perceived Russian surrogates such as Venezuela or Iran.

Simultaneously, it backfires on Democrats by making them

look weak and foolish as they argue that even though the Mueller report says “the investigation did not establish that members of the Trump Campaign conspired or coordinated with the Russian government,” somehow “significant evidence of collusion” still exists, as an increasingly unhinged Rep. Adam Schiff maintains. In the Alice-in-Wonderland world of congressional Democrats, no evidence does not mean no evidence. In fact, it means the opposite.

Voters are unmoved. Ten times more Americans – 80 versus 8 percent – care about healthcare than about Russia according to a recent survey. When CNN pollsters asked a thousand people in mid-March to name the issues that matter most, not one mentioned Russia or the Mueller probe. If they didn’t care when collusion was still an open question, they care even less now that the only issue is obstruction plus a phony constitutional crisis that desperate Democrats have conjured up out of thin air.

Trump the Chief Beneficiary

Besides Fox News – whose ratings have soared while Russia-obsessed CNN’s have plummeted – the chief beneficiary is Trump. Post-Mueller, the man has the wind in his sails. Come 2020, Sen. Bernie Sanders could cut through his phony populism with ease. But if Jeff Bezos’s *Washington Post* succeeds in tarring him with Russia the same way it tried to tar Trump, then the Democratic nominee will be a bland centrist whom the incumbent will happily bludgeon.

Former Vice President Joe Biden – the John McCain-loving, speech-slurring, child-fondler who was for a wall along the Mexican border before he was against it – will end up as a bug splat on the Orange One’s windshield.

Beto O'Rourke, the rich-kid airhead who declared shortly before the Mueller report was released that Trump, "beyond the shadow of a doubt, sought to ... collude with the Russian government," will not fare much better. Sen. Elizabeth Warren meanwhile seems to be tripping over her own two feet as she predicts one moment that Trump is heading to jail, declares the next that voters don't care about the Mueller report because they're too concerned with bread-and-butter issues, and then calls for dragging Congress into the impeachment morass regardless.

Such "logic" is lost on voters, so it seems to be a safe bet that enough will stay home next Election Day to allow the rough beast to slouch towards Bethlehem yet again.

Assange Convicted in Eyes of Press

Then there's Julian Assange, currently serving a 50-week sentence in a supermax prison outside of London after being ejected from the Ecuadorian Embassy. By claiming that the *WikiLeaks* founder was "dissembling" by denying that Russia was the source of the mammoth Democratic National Committee leak in July 2016, Special Counsel Robert Mueller has effectively convicted him in the eyes of Congress and the press.

The New York Times thus reports that Mueller has "revealed" that Russian intelligence was the source while, in a venomous piece by Middlebury College professor Allison Stanger, *The Washington Post* declared that Assange "is neither whistleblower nor journalist," but someone who helped Russian intelligence interfere in "the American electoral process."

Schumer thus greeted Assange's April 11 arrest by [tweeting](#) his "hope [that] he will soon be held to account for his meddling in our elections on behalf of Putin and the Russian government," while, in [a truly chilling statement](#), Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia declared that "[i]t will be really good to get him back on United States soil [so] we can get the facts and the truth from him."

Now that Julian Assange has been arrested, I hope he will soon be held to account for his meddling in our elections on behalf of Putin and the Russian government.

– Chuck Schumer (@SenSchumer) [April 11, 2019](#)

Assange is guiltier than ever. If Washington gets its hands on him, he'll no doubt be hauled before some sort of Star Chamber and then clapped in a dungeon somewhere until he confesses that Russian intelligence made him do it, even though a careful reading of the Mueller report strongly suggests the opposite. (See ["The 'Guccifer 2.0' Gaps in Mueller's Full Report,"](#) April 18.)

Assange languishing behind bars, war breaking out in Latin America or the Persian Gulf, Trump in the Oval Office for four years more – it's the worst of all possible worlds, and the Democratic Party's bizarre fixation with Vladimir Putin is what's pushing it.

Ultimately, Russia-gate is yet a variation on the tired old theme of American innocence. If something goes wrong, it can't be the fault of decent Americans who, as we all know, are too good for our deeply flawed world. Rather, it must be the fault of dastardly foreigners trying to hack our

democracy. It's a deep-rooted form of xenophobia that has fueled everything from the criminalization of marijuana (smuggled in by evil Mexicans) to the 1950s Red Scare (a reaction to Communism smuggled in by evil Russians), and the war on terrorism (the work of evil Muslims). The idea that America may in anyway be responsible for its own fate is of course unthinkable.

But Russia-gate may be the greatest delusion of all. After decades of celebrating Donald Trump as the essence of American flash and hustle, the corporate media have decided that the only way he could have gotten into the White House is if Putin put him there. The upshot is a giant conspiracy to force Americans to turn their back on reality, an effort that can only end in disaster for all concerned, Democrats first and foremost.

Daniel Lazare is the author of "The Frozen Republic: How the Constitution Is Paralyzing Democracy" (Harcourt Brace, 1996) and other books about American politics. He has written for a wide variety of publications from *The Nation* to *Le Monde Diplomatique* and blogs about the Constitution and related matters at Daniellazare.com.

The Real Mueller-Gate Scandal

Craig Murray blasts the special counsel for naming and condemning people without ever interviewing them.

By [Craig Murray](http://CraigMurray.org.uk)

CraigMurray.org.uk



Special Counsel Robert Mueller is either a fool, or deeply corrupt. I do not think he is a fool.

I did not comment instantly on the Mueller report as I was so shocked by it, I have been waiting to see if any other facts come to light in justification. Nothing has. I limit myself here to that area of which I have personal knowledge – the leak of Democratic National Committee and John Podesta emails to *WikiLeaks*. On the wider question of the corrupt Russian 1 percent having business dealings with the corrupt Western 1 percent, all I have to say is that if you believe that is limited in the U.S. by party political boundaries, you are a fool.

On the DNC leak, Mueller started with the prejudice that it was “the Russians” and he deliberately and systematically excluded from evidence anything that contradicted that view.

Mueller, as a matter of determined policy, omitted key steps which any honest investigator would undertake. He did not commission any forensic examination of the DNC servers. He did not interview Bill Binney, a retired technical director at the National Security Agency, the \$14 billion a year U.S. surveillance organization. He did not interview Julian Assange, publisher of *WikiLeaks*. His failure to do any of those obvious things renders his report worthless.

There has never been, by any U.S. law enforcement or security service body, a forensic examination of the DNC servers, despite the fact that the claim those servers were hacked is the very heart of the entire investigation.

Instead, the security services simply accepted the “evidence” provided by the DNC’s own IT security consultants, CrowdStrike, a company which is politically aligned to the Clintons.

That is precisely the equivalent of the police receiving a phone call saying:

“Hello? My husband has just been murdered. He had a knife in his back with the initials of the Russian man who lives next door engraved on it in Cyrillic script. I have employed a private detective who will send you photos of the body and the knife. No, you don’t need to see either of them.”

No Honest Policeman

There is no honest policeman in the world who would agree to that proposition, and neither would Mueller were he remotely an honest man.

Two facts compound this failure.

The first is the absolutely key word of Bill Binney, an acknowledged world leader in cyber surveillance who is infinitely more qualified than CrowdStrike. Binney states that the download rates for the “hack” given by CrowdStrike are at a speed – 41 megabytes per second – that could not even nearly be attained remotely at the location: thus the information must have been downloaded to a local device, eg a memory stick. Binney has further evidence regarding formatting that supports this.

Mueller’s identification of “DC Leaks” and “Guccifer 2.0” as Russian security services is something Mueller attempts to carry off by simple assertion. Mueller shows DNC Leaks to

have been the source of other, unclassified emails sent to *WikiLeaks* that had been obtained under a Freedom of Information request and then Mueller simply assumes, with no proof, the same route was used again for the leaked DNC material. His identification of the Guccifer 2.0 persona with Russian agents is so flimsy as to be laughable. Nor is there any evidence of the specific transfer of the leaked DNC emails from Guccifer 2.0 to *WikiLeaks*. Binney asserts that had this happened, the packets would have been instantly identifiable to the NSA.

Bill Binney is not a “deplorable.” He is a former technical director of the NSA. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met him to hear his expertise on precisely this matter. Binney offered to give evidence to Mueller. Yet did Mueller call him as a witness? No. Binney’s voice is entirely unheard in the report.

Mueller’s refusal to call Binney and consider his evidence was not the action of an honest man.

Vault 7 Release

The second vital piece of evidence we have is from *WikiLeaks* Vault 7 release of CIA material, in which the CIA themselves outline their capacity to “false flag” hacks, leaving behind [misdirecting clues](#) including scraps of foreign script and language. This is precisely what Crowdstrike claim to have found in the “Russian hacking” operation.

So here we have Mueller omitting the key steps of independent forensic examination of the DNC servers and hearing Bill Binney’s evidence. Yet this was not for lack of time. While deliberately omitting to take any steps to

obtain evidence that might disprove the “Russian hacking” story, Mueller had boundless time and energy to waste in wild goose chases after totally non-existent links between *WikiLeaks* and the Trump campaign, including the fiasco of interviewing Roger Stone and Randy Credico.

It is worth remembering that none of the charges against Americans arising from the Mueller inquiry have anything to do with Russian collusion or Trump-*WikiLeaks* collusion, which simply do not exist. The charges all relate to entirely extraneous matters dug up, under the extraordinary U.S. system of “justice,” to try to blackmail those charged with unrelated crimes turned up by the investigation, into fabricating evidence of Russian collusion. The official term for this process of blackmail is of course “plea-bargaining.”

Mueller has indicted 12 Russians he alleges are the GRU agents responsible for the “hack.” The majority of these turn out to be real people who, ostensibly, have jobs and lives which are nothing to do with the GRU. Mueller was taken aback when, rather than simply being in absentia, a number of them had representation in court to fight the charges. Mueller had to back down and ask for an immediate adjournment as soon as the case opened, while he fought to limit disclosure. His entire energies since on this case have been absorbed in submitting motions to limit disclosure, individual by individual, with the object of ensuring that the accused Russians can be convicted without ever seeing, or being able to reply to, the evidence against them. Which is precisely the same as his attitude to contrary evidence in his report.

Mueller's failure to examine the servers or take Binney's evidence pales into insignificance compared to his attack on Julian Assange. Based on no conclusive evidence, Mueller accuses Assange of receiving the emails from Russia. Most crucially, he did not give Assange any opportunity to answer his accusations. For somebody with Mueller's background in law enforcement, declaring somebody in effect guilty, without giving them any opportunity to tell their side of the story, is plain evidence of malice.

Inexplicably, for example, the Mueller report quotes a media report of Assange stating he had "physical proof" the material did not come from Russia, but Mueller simply dismisses this without having made any attempt at all to ask Assange himself.

It is also particularly cowardly as Assange was and is held incommunicado with no opportunity to defend himself. Assange has repeatedly declared the material did not come from the Russian state or from any other state. He was very willing to give evidence to Mueller, which could have been done by video-link, by interview in the Ecuadorian embassy or by written communication. But as with Binney and as with the DNC servers, the entirely corrupt Mueller was unwilling to accept any evidence which might contradict his predetermined narrative.

'Courier' Ignored

Mueller's section headed "The GRU's Transfer of Stolen Material to Wikileaks" is a ludicrous farrago of internet contacts between *WikiLeaks* and persons not proven to be Russian, transferring material not proven to be the DNC

leaks. It too is destroyed by Binney and so pathetic that, having pretended he had proven the case of internet transfer, Mueller then gives the game away by adding “The office cannot rule out that stolen documents were transferred by intermediaries who visited during the summer of 2016.” He names Andrew Muller-Maguhn as a possible courier. Yet again, he did not ask Muller-Maguhn to give evidence. Nor did he ask me, and I might have been able to help him on a few of these points.

To run an “investigation” with a pre-determined idea as to who are the guilty parties, and then to name and condemn those parties in a report, without hearing the testimony of those you are accusing, is a method of proceeding that puts the cowardly and corrupt Mueller beneath contempt.

Mueller gives no evidence whatsoever to back up his simple statement that Seth Rich was not the source of the DNC leak. He accuses Julian Assange of “dissembling” by referring to Seth Rich’s murder. It is an interesting fact that the U.S. security services have shown precisely the same level of interest in examining Seth Rich’s computers that they have shown in examining the DNC servers. It is also interesting that this murder features in a report of historic consequences like that of Mueller, yet has had virtually no serious resource put into finding the killer.

Mueller’s condemnation of Julian Assange for allegedly exploiting the death of Seth Rich, would be infinitely more convincing if the official answer to the question “who murdered Seth Rich?” was not “who cares?”

Craig Murray is an author, broadcaster and human rights

activist. He was British ambassador to Uzbekistan from August 2002 to October 2004 and rector of the University of Dundee from 2007 to 2010. This article first appeared on his [website](#).

PATRICK LAWRENCE: A Week of Dangerous Developments from Iran to North Korea

The increasingly aggressive moves by Trump's hawkish advisers give the impression of a palace coup, writes Patrick Lawrence.

By [Patrick Lawrence](#)

Special to Consortium News



Neoconservative hawks in the Trump administration, led by National Security Advisor John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, moved swiftly to usurp control of U.S. foreign policy last week. Iran, Venezuela, North Korea, China: In all four cases, the president has been effectively sidelined on defense and national security questions in what begins to resemble a palace coup.

Global tensions now escalate by the day; so does the risk of military confrontation, notably but not only with Iran. There have long been indications that President Donald Trump is at odds with many of his foreign policy advisers. This internal conflict broke into the open last Thursday, when the *Washington Post* published [leaked accounts](#) of White House warfare.

“The president’s dissatisfaction has crystallized around national security adviser John Bolton,” the *Post* reported, “and what Trump has groused is an interventionist stance at odds with his view that the United States should stay out of foreign quagmires.”

Immediately at issue between Trump and Bolton is the administration’s recently failed attempt to depose Nicolás Maduro, Venezuela’s president. To be clear, Trump is not the peacenik of the piece: As the *Post* reported, he is dissatisfied with Bolton because the planned coup in Caracas has not proven swift, clean, and risk-free, as the national security adviser apparently promised it would. A quagmire now beckons.

But the president’s feud with the Bolton–Pompeo axis and those in the Washington bureaucracy allied with it, extends well beyond Venezuela. The extremist neoconservatives among his advisers and elsewhere in his administration have consistently foiled Trump’s efforts to negotiate with Tehran and Pyongyang – for a revised nuclear accord with the former, a denuclearization agreement with the latter. Last week the administration’s hawkish wing made Trump’s chances of diplomatic settlements with Iran and North Korea even more remote. As he works toward a comprehensive trade accord with China, the Pentagon appears intent on provoking Beijing in the South China Sea.

Persian Gulf Deployment

Bolton opened the week with an announcement that a carrier group and Air Force bombers would deploy to the Persian Gulf “to send a clear and unmistakable message to the Iranian

regime that any attack on United States interests or on those of our allies will be met with unrelenting force.” Bolton cited “troubling and escalatory indications and warnings” without offering evidence of either.

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Two days later, Pompeo made an unannounced visit to Baghdad to brief Iraqi officials on the administration’s new move against Iran. Pompeo cited the same “credible threat” as Bolton – but again without offering evidence of it. In a statement released Friday, the Pentagon said it was also sending a Patriot antimissile system to the Persian Gulf and that the week’s activity was the start of a series of deployments in the region.

There is some informed speculation, as yet unconfirmed, that Israel – which has long wanted to draw the U.S. into an open conflict with Iran – provided the intelligence Bolton and Pompeo appeared to be acting upon. By Friday, *The New York Times* was citing “American and allied intelligence officials” in its news reports explaining the background of the new deployments.

It is almost pitiable to watch as Trump tries to hold his ground against the hawks who surround him. On Wednesday he announced broad new sanctions to block Iran’s exports of iron, steel, and other metals, which account for about 10 percent of Iran’s export revenue. It was a nonlethal, business-related tightening of the screw, and Trump made his intentions plain later in the week. “What they should be doing is calling me up, sitting down, and we can make a

deal, a fair deal,” Trump said. That is a good description of just what the Bolton–Pompeo axis is determined to prevent.

Tensions with North Korea also escalate. Pyongyang is still smarting from the failure of Trump’s February summit with Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader – another Bolton–Pompeo design. Pyongyang tested short-range missiles twice last week. The Justice Department quickly announced that the U.S. was impounding a North Korean cargo ship that had allegedly violated sanctions when it carried a shipment of coal to Indonesia last year. It is difficult to imagine the Justice Department’s timing was coincidental; whether or not it was an intentional response to the missile tests, the seizure pushed Trump’s ambition to negotiate with Kim further into the deep freeze.

Challenging China

The China case is a big-screen variant of the others. While Trump is pressing Beijing hard for a trade deal – he announced additional tariffs on Chinese goods last Friday – the military appears to be escalating its challenges to China’s maritime claims in the South China Sea. Last week two U.S. warships sailed waters over which China asserts jurisdiction, prompting Beijing to charge heatedly that the U.S. was violating its sovereignty. At best the Pentagon is indifferent to Trump’s negotiating efforts; at worst it opposes them.

Bolton, Pompeo, and those in their camp have two apparent intentions as they effectively isolate Trump on the foreign policy side. One is to override international law with

American diktats. The other – most evident now in the Iranian case – is to provoke a retaliatory move that will serve as a *casus belli* justifying U.S. military action. Rarely in the postwar period, if ever, has Washington manifest this degree of undisguised belligerence in its foreign policy objectives.

It is safe to assume we are not on the precipice of immediate war with any of the nations Bolton and Pompeo have so far singled out. The *Washington Post* report on Bolton's contretemps with Trump indicates that administration hawks are turning leery of military intervention in Venezuela – even as they keep military intervention “on the table.”

Tehran announced last week that it would begin withdrawing from some of the commitments it agreed in the 2015 nuclear accord, but it has so far been careful to remain within the pact's terms. “Iran and the U.S. are not headed toward a war,” the *Financial Times* quoted an Iranian official as stating at the end of the week, “but we may witness some clashes that would then lead to negotiations rather than a full-scale war.”

That assessment holds for now but may prove too optimistic. The pace of policy escalation, now that Trump has lost control in his own administration, is quickening. Given what Bolton and Pompeo got done in a week, it is impossible to predict how aggressively they will make use of the latitude they have recently claimed for themselves.

It has been clear for some time that Trump's confrontation with his policy minders was inevitable from the start. He campaigned in 2015–16 on a disruptive foreign policy

platform. Improved ties with Russia, an end to wars of adventure, negotiations with adversaries rather than potentially explosive confrontations: These were among Trump's bedrock positions, and they provoked opposition within Washington's permanent bureaucracy – call it the Deep State if you like – as soon as Trump took the Republican nomination.

If there is a surprise in the administration now, it does not lie in the emergence of the Bolton–Pompeo axis. Something like it was never more than just beneath the surface in the Trump White House. The surprise lies in Trump's persistence in the face of unrelenting resistance from those wedded to the fantasy of eternal American primacy.

Patrick Lawrence, a correspondent abroad for many years, chiefly for the *International Herald Tribune*, is a columnist, essayist, author, and lecturer. His most recent book is "Time No Longer: Americans After the American Century" (Yale). Follow him [@thefloutist](#). Visit his website [here](#). Support his work via [The Floutist](#).

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How US and Foreign Intel Agencies Interfered in a US Election

The evidence is plain—there was a broad, coordinated effort by the Obama Administration, with the help of foreign governments, to target Donald Trump and paint him as a

Russian stooge, writes Larry Johnson

By **Larry C. Johnson**

Sic Semper Tyrannis



The preponderance of evidence makes this very simple—there was a broad, coordinated effort by the Obama Administration, with the help of foreign governments, to target Donald Trump and paint him as a stooge of Russia.

The Mueller Report provides irrefutable evidence that the so-called Russian collusion case against Donald Trump was a deliberate fabrication by intelligence and law enforcement organizations in the United States and the United Kingdom and organizations aligned with the Clinton Campaign.

The New York Times reported that a man with a long history of working with the CIA, and a female FBI informant, traveled to London in September of 2016 and tried unsuccessfully to entrap George Papadopolous. The biggest curiosity is that U.S. intelligence or law enforcement officials fully briefed British intelligence on what they were up to. Quite understandable given what we now know about British spying on the Trump Campaign.

The Mueller investigation of Trump “collusion” with Russia prior to the 2016 Presidential election focused on eight cases:

- Proposed Trump Tower Project in Moscow
- George Papadopolous
- Carter Page
- Dimitri Simes

- Veselnetskya Meeting at Trump Tower (June 16, 2016)
- Events at Republican Convention
- Post-Convention Contacts with Russian Ambassador Kislyak
- Paul Manafort

One simple fact emerges—of the eight cases or incidents of alleged Trump Campaign interaction with the Russians investigated by the Mueller team, the proposals to interact with the Russian Government or with Putin originated with FBI informants, MI-6 assets or people paid by Fusion GPS, and not Trump or his people.

There is not a single instance where Donald Trump or any member of his campaign team initiated contact with the Russians for the purpose of gaining derogatory information on Hillary or obtaining support to boost the Trump campaign. Not one.

Simply put, Trump and his campaign were the target of an elaborate, wide ranging covert action designed to entrap him and members of his team as an agent of Russia.

Let's look in detail at each of the cases.

THE PROPOSED TRUMP TOWER PROJECT IN MOSCOW, according to Mueller's report, originated with an FBI Informant—Felix Sater. Here's what the Mueller Report states:

“In the late summer of 2015, the Trump Organization received a new inquiry about pursuing a Trump Tower project in Moscow. In approximately September 2015, Felix Sater . . . contacted Cohen (i.e., Michael Cohen) on behalf of I.C. Expert Investment Company (I.C. Expert), a Russian real-estate development corporation controlled by

Andrei Vladimirovich Rozov. Sater had known Rozov since approximately 2007 and, in 2014, had served as an agent on behalf of Rozov during Rozov's purchase of a building in New York City. Sater later contacted Rozov and proposed that I.C. Expert pursue a Trump Tower Moscow project in which I.C. Expert would license the name and brand from the Trump Organization but construct the building on its own. Sater worked on the deal with Rozov and another employee of I.C. Expert." (see page 69 of the Mueller Report).

Mueller, as noted previously, is downright dishonest in failing to identify Sater as an FBI informant. Sater was not just a private entrepreneur looking to make some coin. He was a fully signed up FBI informant. Sater's status as an FBI snitch was first exposed in 2012. Sater also was a boyhood chum of Michael Cohen, the target being baited in this operation. Another inconvenient fact excluded from the Mueller report is that one of Mueller's Chief Prosecutors, Andrew Weissman, signed the deal with Felix Sater in December 1998 that put Sater into the FBI Informant business.

All suggestions for meeting with the Russian Government, including Putin, originated with Felix Sater. The use of Sater on this particular project started in September 2015.

[For more on Sater please see my previous posts, Felix Sater–The Rosetta Stone for the FBI/CIA Conspiracy Against Trump?, Felix Sater and the Steele Dossier.]

GEORGE PAPADPOLOUS

Papadopolous was targeted by British and U.S. intelligence starting in late December 2015, when he is offered out of the blue a job with the London Centre of International Law and Practice Limited (LCILP)?. The LCILP has all of the hallmarks of an intelligence front company. LCILP began as an offshoot from another company—EN Education Group Limited—which describes itself as “a global education consultancy, facilitating links between students, education providers and organisations with an interest in education worldwide”.

EN Education and LCILP are owned and run by Nagi Khalid Idris, a 48-year-old British citizen of Sudanese origin. For no apparent reason Idris offers Papadopolous a job as the Director of the LCILP’s International Energy and Natural Resources Division. Then in March of 2016, Idris and Arvinder Sambei (who acted as an attorney for the FBI on a 9-11 extradition case in the UK), insist on introducing Joseph Mifsud to Papadopolous.

It is Joseph Mifsud who introduces the idea of meeting Putin following a lunch in London (from Papadopolous’s book “Deep State Target: How I Got Caught in the Crosshairs of the Plot to Bring Down President Trump”):

“The lunch is booked for March 24 at the Grange Holborn Hotel, “When I get there, Mifsud is waiting for me in the lobby with an attractive, fashionably dressed young woman with dirty blonde hair at his side. He introduces her as Olga Vinogradova.” (p. 76)

“Mifsud sells her hard. “Olga is going to be your inside woman to Moscow. She knows everyone.” He tells me she was

a former official at the Russian Ministry of Trade. Then he waxes on about introducing me to the Russian ambassador in London.” (p. 77)

“On April 12, “Olga” writes: “I have already alerted my personal links to our conversation and your request. The embassy in London is very much aware of this. As mentioned, we are all very excited by the possibility of a good relationship with Mr. Trump. The Russian Federation would love to welcome him once his candidature would be officially announced.”

And it is Mifsud who raises the possibility of getting dirt on Hillary:

“Then Mifsud returns from the Valdai conference. On April 26 we meet for breakfast at the Andaz Hotel, near Liverpool Street Station, one of the busiest train stations in London. He’s in an excellent mood and claims he met with high-level Russian government officials. But once again, he’s very short on specifics. This is becoming a real pattern with Mifsud. He hasn’t offered any names besides Timofeev. Then, he leans across the table in a conspiratorial manner. The Russians have “dirt” on Hillary Clinton, he tells me. “Emails of Clinton,” he says. “They have thousands of emails.”

Here again we encounter the lying and obfuscation of the Mueller team. They falsely characterize Mifsud as an agent of Russia. In fact, he has close and longstanding ties to both British and U.S. intelligence ([Disobedient Media lays out the Mifsud mystery in detail](#)).

Mifsud was not alone. The FBI and the CIA also were in the game of trying to entrap Papadopolous. In September of 2016, Papadopolous was being wined and dined by Halper (who has longstanding ties to the U.S. intelligence community) and Azra Turk, an FBI Informant/researcher (see New York Times).

The FBI disingenuously claims they ran Azra Turk at Papadopolous because they were alarmed ostensibly by Russia's attempts to disrupt the 2016 election. But Papadopolous was not seeking out Russian contacts. He was being baited. It was Mifsud and others tied to British and U.S. intelligence who were bringing up the "opportunity" to work with the Russians.

CARTER PAGE

The section of the Mueller report that deals with Carter Page is a total travesty. Mueller and his team, for example, initially misrepresent Page's status with the Trump campaign—he is described as "working" for the campaign, which implies a paid position, when he was in fact only a volunteer foreign policy advisor. Mueller also paints Page's prior experience and work in Russia as evidence that Page was being used by Russian intelligence, but says nothing about the fact that Page was being regularly debriefed by the CIA and the FBI during the same period. In other words, Page was cooperating with U.S. intelligence and law enforcement. But this fact is omitted in the Mueller report.

Mueller eventually accurately describes Page's role in the Trump campaign as follows:

"In January 2016, Page began volunteering on an **informal**,

unpaid basis for the Trump Campaign after Ed Cox, a state Republican Party official, introduced Page to Trump Campaign officials. Page told the Office that his goal in working on the Campaign was to help candidate Trump improve relations with Russia. To that end, Page emailed Campaign officials offering his thoughts on U.S.-Russia relations, prepared talking points and briefing memos on Russia, and proposed that candidate Trump meet with President Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

“In communications with Campaign officials, Page also repeatedly touted his high-level contacts in Russia and his ability to forge connections between candidate Trump and senior Russian governmental officials. For example, on January 30, 2016, Page sent an email to senior Campaign officials stating that he had “spent the past week in Europe and had been in discussions with some individuals with close ties to the Kremlin” who recognized that Trump could have a “game-changing effect . . . in bringing the end of the new Cold War. The email stated that ” [t]hrough [his] discussions with these high level contacts,” Page believed that “a direct meeting in Moscow between Mr. Trump and Putin could be arranged.”

The Mueller presentation portrays Carter Page in a nefarious, negative light. His contacts with Russia are characterized as inappropriate and unjustified. Longstanding business experience in a particular country is not proof of wrong doing. No consideration is given at all to Page’s legitimate concerns raising about the dismal state of U.S./Russia relations following the U.S. backed coup in the Ukraine and the subsequent annexation of Crimea by Russia.

Page's association with the Trump campaign was quite brief—he lasted seven months, being removed as a foreign policy advisor on Sept. 24. Page was not identified publicly as a Trump foreign policy advisor until March of 2016, but the evidence presented in the Mueller report clearly indicates that Page was already a target of intelligence agencies, in the U.S. and abroad, long before the FISA warrant of Oct. 2016.

While serving on the foreign policy team Page continued his business and social contacts in Russia, but was never tasked by the Trump team to pursue or promote contacts with Putin and his team. In fact, Page's proposals, suggestions and recommendations were either ignored or directly rebuffed.

The timeline reported in the Mueller report regarding Page's trip to Russia in early July raises questions about the intel collected on that trip and the so-called "intel" revealed in the Steele Dossier with respect to Page. Carter admits to meeting with individuals, such as Dmitry Peskov and Igor Sechin, who appear in the Steele Dossier. Page's meetings in Moscow turned out to be innocuous and uneventful. Nothing he did resembled clandestine activity. Yet, the Steele report on that visit suggested just the opposite and used the tactic of guilt by association to imply that Page was up to something dirty.

The bottomline for Mueller is that Page did not do anything wrong and no one in the Trump Campaign embraced his proposals for closer ties with Russia.

DMITRI SIMES

The targeting and investigation of Dmitri Simes is

disgusting and an abuse of law enforcement authority. Full disclosure. I know Dmitri. For awhile, in the 2002-2003 time period, I was a regular participant at Nixon Center events. For example, I was at a round table in December 2002 on the imminent invasion of Iraq. Colonel Pat Lang sat on one side of me and Ambassador Joe Wilson on the other. Directly across the table was Charles Krauthammer. Dmitri ran an honest seminar.

The entire section on Dmitri Simes, under other circumstances, could be viewed as something bizarre and amusing. But the mere idea that Simes was somehow an agent of Putin and a vehicle for helping Trump work with the Russians to steal the 2016 election is crazy and idiotic. Those in the FBI who were so stupid as to buy into this nonsense should have their badges and guns taken away. They are too dumb to work in law enforcement.

Dmitri's only sin was to speak calmly, intelligently and rationally about foreign policy dealings with Russia. We now know that in this new hysteria of the 21st Century Russian scare that qualities such as reason and rationality are proof of one's willingness to act as a puppet of Vladimir Putin.

TRUMP TOWER MEETING (JUNE 9, 2016)

This is the clearest example of a plant designed to entrap the Trump team. Mueller, once again, presents a very disingenuous account:

“On June 9, 2016, senior representatives of the Trump Campaign met in Trump Tower with a Russian attorney

expecting to receive derogatory information about Hillary Clinton from the Russian government. The meeting was proposed to Donald Trump Jr. in an email from Robert Goldstone, at the request of his then-client Emin Agalarov, the son of Russian real-estate developer Aras Agalarov. Goldstone relayed to Trump Jr. that the “Crown prosecutor of Russia ... offered to provide the Trump Campaign with some official documents and information that would incriminate Hillary and her dealings with Russia” as “part of Russia and its government’s support for Mr. Trump.” Trump Jr. immediately responded that “if it’s what you say I love it,” and arranged the meeting through a series of emails and telephone calls.” ...

The Russian attorney who spoke at the meeting, Natalia Veselnitskaya, had previously worked for the Russian government and maintained a relationship with that government throughout this period of time. She claimed that funds derived from illegal activities in Russia were provided to Hillary Clinton and other Democrats. Trump Jr. requested evidence to support those claims, but Veselnitskaya did not provide such information.”

Ignore for a moment that no information on Hillary was passed or provided (and doing such a thing is not illegal). The real problem is with what Mueller does not say and did not investigate. Mueller conveniently declines to mention the fact that Veselnitskaya was working closely with the firm Hillary Clinton hired to produce the Steele Dossier. NBC News reported on Veselnitskaya:

“The information that a Russian lawyer brought with her

when she met Donald Trump Jr. in June 2016 stemmed from research conducted by Fusion GPS, the same firm that compiled the infamous Trump dossier, according to the lawyer and a source familiar with the matter.

In an interview with NBC News, Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya says **she first received the supposedly incriminating information she brought to Trump Tower – describing alleged tax evasion and donations to Democrats – from Glenn Simpson**, the Fusion GPS owner, who had been hired to conduct research in a New York federal court case.”

Even a mediocre investigator would recognize the problem of the relationship between the lawyer claiming to have dirty, damning info on Hillary with the firm Hillary hired to dig up dirt on Donald Trump. This was another botched set up and the Trump folks did not take the bait.

EVENTS AT THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION

This portion of the Mueller report is a complete farce. Foreign ambassdors, including the Russian (and the Chinese) attend Republican and Democrat Conventions. Presidential candidates and their advisors speak to those ambassadors. So, where is the beef? Answer. There isn't any. That this "event" was considered something worthy of a counter intelligence investigation is just one more piece of evidence that law enforcement and intelligence were weaponized against the Trump campaign.

POST-CONVENTION CONTACTS WITH RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR KISLYAK

Ditto. As noted in the previous paragraph, trying to

criminalize normal diplomatic contacts, especially with a country where we share important, vital national security interests, is but further evidence of the crazy anti-Russian hysteria that has infected the anti-Trumpers. Pathetic.

MANAFORT

If Paul Manafort had rebuffed Trump's offer to run his campaign, he would be walking free today and still buying expensive suits and evading taxes along with his Clinton buddy, Greg Craig. Instead, he became another target for DOJ, the intel community and the DNC, which were desperate to portray Trump as a tool of the Kremlin. Thanks to John Solomon of *The Hill*, we now know the impetus to target Manafort came from the DNC:

The boomerang from the Democratic Party's failed attempt to connect Donald Trump to Russia's 2016 election meddling is picking up speed, and its flight path crosses right through Moscow's pesky neighbor, Ukraine. That is where there is growing evidence a foreign power was asked, and in some cases tried, to help Hillary Clinton.

In its most detailed account yet, Ukraine's embassy in Washington says a Democratic National Committee insider during the 2016 election solicited dirt on Donald Trump's campaign chairman and even tried to enlist the country's president to help.

In written answers to questions, Ambassador Valeriy Chaly's office says DNC contractor Alexandra Chalupa sought information from the Ukrainian government on Paul Manafort's dealings inside the country, in hopes of forcing the issue before Congress.

Manafort was not colluding, but the Clinton campaign and the Obama Administration most certainly were.

Take these eight events as a whole a very clear picture emerges—U.S. and foreign intelligence (especially the UK) and U.S. law enforcement collaborated in a broad effort to bait the Trump team with ostensible Russian entreaties in order to paint Trump as a tool of the Kremlin. That effort is now being exposed and those culpable will hopefully face justice. This should sicken and alarm every American regardless of political party. Will justice be served?

Larry C. Johnson is a former CIA analyst and counterterrorism official at the State Department. This [article](#) first appeared on [Sic Semper Tyrannis](#).

PEPE ESCOBAR: The Eagle, the Bear and the Dragon

The eagle has conveniently forgotten that the original, Ancient Silk Road linked the dragon with the Roman empire for centuries – with no interlopers outside of Eurasia, muses Pepe Escobar.

By [Pepe Escobar](#)

Special to Consortium News



Once upon a time, deep into the night in selected campfires across the deserts of Southwest Asia, I used to tell a [fable](#) about the eagle, the bear and the dragon – much to the amusement of my Arab and Persian interlocutors.

It was about how, in the young 21st century, the eagle, the bear and the dragon had taken their (furry) gloves off and engaged in what turned out to be Cold War 2.0.

As we approach the end of the second decade of this already incandescent century, perhaps it's fruitful to upgrade the fable. With all due respect to Jean de la Fontaine, excuse me while I kiss the (desert) sky again.

Long gone are the days when a frustrated bear repeatedly offered to cooperate with the eagle and its minions on a burning question: nuclear missiles.

The bear repeatedly argued that the deployment of interceptor missiles and radars in that land of the blind leading the blind – Europe – was a threat. The eagle repeatedly argued that this is to protect us from those rogue Persians.

Now the eagle – claiming the dragon is getting an easy ride – has torn down every treaty in sight and is bent on deploying nuclear missiles in selected eastern parts of the land of the blind leading the blind, essentially targeting the bear.

All That Glitters is Silk

Roughly two decades after what top bear Putin defined as “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century”, he proposed a form of USSR light; a political/economic body called the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

The idea was to have the EAEU interact with the EU – the top institution of the motley crew congregated as the blind leading the blind.

The eagle not only rejected the possible integration; it came up with a modified color revolution scenario to unplug Ukraine from the EAEU.

Even earlier than that, the eagle had wanted to set up a New Silk Road under its total control. The eagle had conveniently forgotten that the original, Ancient Silk Road linked the dragon with the Roman empire for centuries – with no interlopers outside of Eurasia.

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So one can imagine the eagle's stupor when the dragon irrupted on the global stage with its own super-charged New Silk Roads – upgrading the bear original idea of a free trade area “from Lisbon to Vladivostok” to a multi-connectivity corridor, terrestrial and maritime, from eastern China to western Europe and everything in between, spanning the whole of Eurasia.

Facing this new paradigm the blind, well, remained blind for as long as anyone could remember; they simply could not get their act together.

The eagle, meanwhile, was incrementally raising the stakes. It launched what amounted for all practical purposes to a progressively weaponized encirclement of the dragon.



The eagle made a series of moves that amount to inciting nations bordering the South China Sea to antagonize the dragon, while repositioning an array of toys – nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers, fighter jets – closer and closer to the dragon's territory.

All the time, what the dragon saw – and continues to see – is a battered eagle trying to muscle its way out of an irreversible decline by trying to intimidate, isolate and sabotage the dragon's irreversible ascent back to where it has been for 18 of the past 20 centuries; enthroned as the king of the jungle.

A key vector is that Eurasia-wide players know that under the new laws of the jungle the dragon simply can't – and won't – be reduced to the status of a supporting actor. And Eurasia-wide players are too smart to embark on a Cold War 2.0 that will undermine Eurasia itself.

The eagle's reaction to the dragon's New Silk strategy took some time to swing from inaction to outright demonization – complementing the joint description of both the dragon and the bear as existential threats.

And yet, for all the spinning crossfire, Eurasia-wide

players are not exactly impressed anymore with an eagle empire armed to its teeth. Especially after the eagle's crest was severely damaged by failure upon hunting failure in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria. Eagle aircraft carriers patrolling the eastern part of Mare Nostrum are not exactly scaring the bear, the Persians and the Syrians.

A "reset" between the eagle and the bear was always a myth. It took some time – and much financial distress – for the bear to realize there won't be any reset, while the dragon only saw a reset towards open confrontation.

After establishing itself, slowly but surely, as the most advanced military power on the planet, with hypersonic know-how, the bear came to a startling conclusion: we don't care anymore about what the eagle says – or does.

Under the Raging Volcano

Meanwhile, the dragon kept expanding, inexorably, across all Asian latitudes as well as Africa, Latin America and even across the unemployment-infested pastures of the austerity-hit blind leading the blind.

The dragon is firmly assured that, if cornered to the point of resorting to a nuclear option, it holds the power to make the eagle's staggering deficit explode, degrade its credit rating to junk, and wreak havoc in the global financial system.

No wonder the eagle, under an all-enveloping paranoid cloud of cognitive dissonance, feeding state propaganda 24/7 to its subjects and minions, keeps spewing out lava like a raging volcano – dispensing sanctions to a great deal of the

planet, entertaining regime change wet dreams, launching a total energy embargo against the Persians, resurrecting the “war on terra”, and aiming to punishlike a Bat Out Of Hell any journalist, publisher or whistleblower revealing its inner machinations.

It hurts, so bad, to admit that the political/economic center of a new multipolar world will be Asia – actually Eurasia.

As the eagle got more and more threatening, the bear and the dragon got closer and closer in their strategic partnership. Now both bear and dragon have too many strategic links across the planet to be intimidated by the eagle’s massive Empire of Bases or those periodic coalitions of the (somewhat reluctant) willing.

To match comprehensive, in-progress Eurasia integration, of which the New Silk Roads are the graphic symbol, the eagle’s fury, unleashed, has nothing to offer – except rehashing a war against Islam coupled with the weaponized cornering of both bear and dragon.

Then there’s Persia – those master chess players. The eagle has been gunning for the Persians ever since they got rid of the eagle’s proconsul, the Shah, in 1979 – and this after the eagle and perfidious Albion had already smashed democracy to place the Shah, who made Saddam look like Gandhi, in power in 1953.

The eagle wants all that oil and natural gas back – not to mention a new Shah as the new gendarme of the Persian Gulf. The difference is now the bear and the dragon are saying No Way. What is the eagle to do? Set up the false flag to end

all false flags?

This is where we stand now. And once again, we reach the end – though not the endgame. There’s still no moral to this revamped fable. We continue to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Our only, slim hope is that a bunch of Hollow Men obsessed by the Second Coming won’t turn Cold War 2.0 into Armageddon.

Pepe Escobar, a veteran Brazilian journalist, is the correspondent-at-large for Hong Kong-based [Asia Times](#). His latest book is [“2030.”](#) Follow him on [Facebook](#).

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Top Ten Questions About the Mueller Report

Daniel Lazare examines some of the missing pieces in the special counsel’s 448-page tome on Russian interference.

By [Daniel Lazare](#)

Special to Consortium News



In January 2017, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper issued a [report](#) about Russian interference co-signed by three other agencies – the National Security Agency, the FBI, and the CIA – that was so evidence-free that even *The New York Times* [said](#) it was “unlikely to change the minds of skeptics who ... remember the intelligence agencies’ faulty

assessments on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.”

“We assess Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016,” the report stated. “We also assess Putin and the Russian Government aspired to help President-elect Trump. ... We assess with high confidence that Russian military intelligence (General Staff Main Intelligence Directorate or GRU) used the Guccifer 2.0 persona and DCLeaks.com to release U.S. victim data...”

That was it. No back-up, no substantiation, no analysis other than to point out that Russian President Vladimir Putin and Hillary Clinton were on bad terms and that Russia hoped for better from Trump. Moreover, the report included a bizarre seven-page attack on RT, the Moscow-backed news outlet formerly known as Russia Today, for “highlight[ing] criticism of alleged U.S. shortcomings” by asserting, among other things, “that the U.S. two-party system does not represent the views of at least one-third of the population and is a ‘sham.’” If Clapper & Co. couldn’t tell the difference between a news agency from a hostile intelligence service – or between legitimate criticism and a foreign attack – then what good was their judgment regarding other Russian government activities?

But with Special Prosecutor Robert Mueller’s 448-page tome on Russian interference, surely we’ve turned a corner, right?

Wrong. Mueller’s door-stopper of a report may be chockfull of facts, but it’s also filled with the non sequiturs, loose threads and self-serving arguments that we’ve come to expect from official Washington. It’s good on collusion, pointing

out that reports of a Trump-Russia conspiracy remain unsubstantiated despite desperate Democratic efforts to spin it otherwise.

But it's lousy on interference, regurgitating the standard intelligence-community line that Russia "interfered in the 2016 presidential election in sweeping and systematic fashion." Simultaneously, it is remarkably incurious about how the scandal began, who propelled it along, and how it all snowballed into a mega-Watergate.

With that in mind, here are 10 questions that the report should answer but doesn't.

No. 1: Was it Bernie in a Speedo?

In its discussion of the Internet Research Agency, the alleged St. Petersburg troll farm that supposedly used social media to interfere in the 2016 election, the report quotes congressional testimony by Facebook General Counsel Colin Stretch stating that the company had linked the Internet Research Agency to 470 phony accounts that "collectively made 80,000 posts between January 2015 and August 2017" that may have "reached as many as 126 million persons."

This sounds alarming. But that's not all Stretch said. He also testified that American Facebook users received a total of 33 trillion posts over the same period, a figure more than 400 million times greater. With a typical user receiving roughly 220 posts per day, he estimated that 29 million people may have come across one IRA item over more than two years and that each recipient may have then passed along to three or four others – hence the figure of 126

million. (See Gareth Porter, "[33 Trillion More Reasons Why The New York Times Gets It Wrong on Russia-gate](#)," Nov. 2, 2018.)

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What might that item have been? Could it have been a cartoon of a [muscle-bound Bernie Sanders](#) in a Speedo? A picture of Jesus arm-wrestling with [a pro-Hillary Satan](#)? Why doesn't the report mention the strange and inept material the Internet Research Agency put out or the less sensational figures issued by Facebook? Is it because Mueller wants to perpetuate the myth of massive Russian interference – the kind of interference, by the way, in which the U.S. engages with other countries around the clock?

No. 2: Partial Accounting?

The report says that 3,814 Twitter accounts controlled by the Internet Research Agency may also have reached 1.4 million users. This also sounds scary. But what the report doesn't say is that while the Internet Research Agency allegedly posted [176,000 tweets](#) during the 10-week presidential campaign, that's a drop in the bucket compared to the [one billion election-related](#) messages that Americans tweeted overall. Why not cite that number too?

No. 3: Just Another Clickbait Operation?

The report notes that only 8.4 percent of IRA tweets were election-related. If so, what does Mueller think the other 91.6 percent were about? Could it be that IRA was not an

intelligence agency after all, but, as it's been argued, a "[clickbait](#)" operation aimed at drumming up business?

No. 4: Under-Cover Hoopla?

The report discusses Yevgeny Prigozhin, the founder of the Internet Research Agency, saying that "IRA employees, claiming to be U.S. social activists and administrators of Facebook groups, recruited U.S. persons to hold signs (including one in front of the white House) that read 'Happy 55th Birthday Dear Boss,' as an homage to Prigozhin (whose 55th birthday was on June 1, 2016)." What kind of intelligence operation calls attention to itself in such a flamboyant manner? Is this yet more evidence that the Internet Research Agency was something entirely different?

No. 5: Investigation by News Clip?

Although last summer's [indictment](#) of the Internet Research Agency was silent on the question of Russian involvement in Prigozhin's alleged activities, the Mueller report argues that his Kremlin links are strong after all. The evidence: a *New York Times* article, "[Yevgeny Prigozhin, Russian Oligarch Indicted by US., Is Known as 'Putin's Cook.'](#)" After nearly two years, is this all that 19 attorneys and 40 FBI agents working for Mueller could come up with – a newspaper clip?

No. 6: Another Source on GRU Hack?

"By no later than April 12, 2016," the report continues, "the GRU gained access to the DCCC [i.e. Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee] computer network using the credential stolen from a DCCC employee who had been

successfully spearphished the day before.” How does team Mueller know what the GRU was up to when the Democratic National Committee refused to grant the FBI access to its computers? Does he have another source he’s not telling us about?

No. 7: More on Mifsud?

The report’s discussion of Maltese academic Joseph Mifsud is strikingly incomplete. After all, it was Mifsud who got Russia-gate rolling by telling President Donald Trump’s foreign-policy adviser, George Papadopoulos, over breakfast at a London hotel that Russia had “dirt” on Hilary Clinton in the form of “thousands of emails.” It was this tip, which Papadopoulos relayed to top Australian diplomat Alexander Downer, that prompted the formal FBI investigation known as “Crossfire Hurricane” when word reached Washington.

This makes Mifsud an important guy. Yet the report says little about him other than he “maintained various Russian contacts while living in London” and that one such contact was a former employee of the Internet Research Agency. Yet abundant evidence suggests that Mifsud in fact enjoyed extensive ties to Western intelligence.

Stephan Roh, a Swiss-German lawyer who hired him as a consultant, writes in a self-published book that Mifsud has “only one master: the Western Political, Diplomatic, and Intelligence World, his only home, of which he is still deeply dependent.” Photographs have surfaced of Mifsud with British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and with Claire Smith, a top British intelligence official with whom he taught a course for Italian military and law-enforcement

personnel at a private institute in Rome that Roh partly owns.

British and Russian intelligence agents normally do not team up in such a manner. So why doesn't Mueller mention such links? The report also notes that Mifsud introduced Papadopoulos to an attractive young woman named Olga Polonskaya, whom he falsely billed as Putin's niece and who offered to help set up a meeting between Trump and the Russian president.

But why would Mifsud go to such lengths? Isn't Mueller curious as to whether he was trying to lead Papadopoulos into a trap? Or is this another avenue he doesn't want to go down in order to maintain a narrative about evil Russians targeting a hapless west?

The report doesn't mention Downer by name and also doesn't mention Christopher Steele, the ex-MI6 agent whose 35-page "golden showers" dossier on Trump's alleged Russia links created a media frenzy. It also doesn't mention that *The Washington Post* reported that the "golden showers" section was written by a Clinton operative. Since Steele is as crucial to the story as Mifsud or Downer, shouldn't we know more about him as well – who recruited him, who provided him advice along the way, who fed him information?

No. 8: Something Missing on Millian?

On the other hand, the report devotes two pages to Sergei Millian, the Belarus-American who may also have tried to lure Papadopoulos into a trap by offering to "share with you a disruptive technology that might be instrumental in your political work for the campaign." But it fails to mention

that Millian was simultaneously a source for the Steele Dossier. A connection like this fairly cries out for an investigation. Yet Mueller is apparently uninterested – why?

No. 9: Failure to Inform on Sater?

Mueller likewise neglects to mention that Felix Sater, the Russian-American mobster pushing Trump Tower Moscow, was an FBI informant and that Henry Oknyansky, a Russian expatriate who tried to interest the Trump campaign in still more dirt on Clinton, was as well. Why the reticence?

No. 10: Eavesdropping on Next Administration?

After President Barack Obama slapped sanctions on Russia for alleged election interference in December 2016, the report says: “Members of the intelligence community were surprised by Russia’s decision not to retaliate. When analyzing Russia’s response, they became aware of [future National Security Adviser Michael] Flynn’s discussions of sanctions with [Russian ambassador Sergey] Kislyak.”

How did intelligence agents become aware of such discussions? Were they listening in? Is Mueller at all concerned that intelligence agencies were apparently eavesdropping on an incoming presidential administration?

One could go on – about the report’s dubious attempts to paint *WikiLeaks* as an arm of the GRU (see my story, “The ‘Guccifer 2.0’ Gaps in Mueller’s Full Report,” April 18, 2019), about the thin evidence the report marshals in its effort to brand Paul Manafort’s associate Konstantin Kilimnik a Russia spy (volume one, p. 133), about the FBI’s

attempt to use the defunct Logan Act – a two-century old law banning private diplomacy that has been dormant since 1852 – to launch an investigation into Flynn (volume two, p. 37), and so on.

But the point should be clear. The Mueller report is an exercise in disinformation. It generates more questions than answers about what may well have been an effort to sabotage U.S.-Russian relations and cripple the White House.

“I can’t do anything with Russia,” Trump complained after two months in office. “There’s things I’d like to do with Russia, with trade, with ISIS, they’re all over me with this.” Did it occur to Mueller that this is just the sort of policy paralysis that a phony Russia-gate scandal was designed to achieve?

Daniel Lazare is the author of “The Frozen Republic: How the Constitution Is Paralyzing Democracy” (Harcourt Brace, 1996) and other books about American politics. He has written for a wide variety of publications from *The Nation* to *Le Monde Diplomatique* and blogs about the Constitution and related matters at Daniellazare.com.

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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

Special to Consortium News



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 Assange](#)

[VIPS: Mueller’s Forensics-Free Findings](#)

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the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He was a CIA analyst for 27 years, with special expertise on Russia, and prepared *The President's Daily Brief* for Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Reagan. He is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).

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Special Counsel Mueller: Disingenuous and Dishonest

Larry C. Johnson sees real meat on the bone for Barr's upcoming investigation of spying by law enforcement and intelligence on the Trump campaign. And Trump has tweeted about it.

On Wednesday Donald Trump tweeted:

"Former CIA analyst Larry Johnson accuses United Kingdom Intelligence of helping Obama Administration Spy on the 2016 Trump Presidential Campaign."
[@OANN](#) WOW! It is now just a question of time before the truth comes out, and when it does, it will be a beauty!

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [April 24, 2019](#)

A spokesperson for the GCHQ, Britain's electronic spying agency, reacted in a statement: "As we have previously stated, the allegations that GCHQ was asked to conduct 'wire tapping' against the then-president elect are nonsense. They are utterly ridiculous and should be ignored."

Johnson developed his theory on his blog, republished here.

By **Larry C Johnson**

Sic Semper Tyrannis



While President Donald Trump is correct to celebrate the Mueller report's conclusion that no one on Trump's side of the ledger attempted to or succeeded in collaborating or colluding with the Russian government or Russian spies, there remains a dark cloud behind the silver lining. And I am not referring to the claims of alleged obstruction of justice.

A careful reading of the report reveals that Mueller has issued findings that are both disingenuous and dishonest. The report is a failed hatchet job. Part of the failure can be attributed to the amount of material that Attorney General William Barr allowed to be released. It appears that Bill Barr's light editing may have been intended to expose the bias and sloppiness of Special Counsel Robert Mueller and his team.

Let us start with the case of trying to build a Trump Tower in Moscow. If you were to believe that the Steele Dossier accurately reported Russian President Vladimir Putin's attitude towards Trump, then a Trump real estate deal in Moscow was a slam dunk. According to one of Christopher Steele's breathless reports:

"The Kremlin's cultivation operation on TRUMP also had comprised offering him various lucrative real estate development business deals in Russia, especially in relation to the ongoing 2018 World Cup soccer

tournament. However, so far, for reasons unknown, TRUMP had not taken up any of these.”

Then there is reality. The impetus, the encouragement for the Moscow project came from one man – Felix Sater. Here from page 69 of the Mueller Report:

In the late summer of 2015, the Trump Organization received a new inquiry about pursuing a Trump Tower project in Moscow. In approximately September 2015, Felix Sater . . . contacted Cohen on behalf of I.C. Expert Investment Company (I.C. Expert), a Russian real-estate development corporation controlled by Andrei Vladimirovich Rozov.¹⁰⁷ Sater had known Rozov since approximately 2007 and, in 2014, had served as an agent on behalf of Rozov during Rozov’s purchase of a building in New York City.³⁰⁵ Sater later contacted Rozov and proposed that I.C. Expert pursue a Trump Tower Moscow project in which I.C. Expert would license the name and brand from the Trump Organization but construct the building on its own. Sater worked on the deal with Rozov and another employee of I.C. Expert.

To reiterate – if the Steele Dossier were based on truthful intelligence then the Trump Organization only had to sit back, stretch out its hands and seize the moment. Instead, little Felix Sater keeps coming back to the well. In January 2016, according to the Mueller report:

Sater then sent a draft invitation for Cohen to visit Moscow to discuss the Trump Moscow project, along with a

note to “[t]ell me if the letter is good as amended by me or make whatever changes you want and send it back to me.”

After a further round of edits, on January 25, 2016, Sater sent Cohen an invitation- signed by Andrey Ryabinskiy of the company MHJ-to travel to”Moscow for a working visit” about the “prospects of development and the construction business in Russia,” “the various land plots available suited for construction of this enormous Tower,” and “the opportunity to co-ordinate a follow up visit to Moscow by Mr. Donald Trump.

This produced nothing. No deal, no trip. But Sater persisted, targeting Michael Cohen, Trump’s personal lawyer and an executive in the Trump Organization:

Beginning in late 2015, Sater repeatedly tried to arrange for Cohen and candidate Trump, as representatives of the Trump Organization, to travel to Russia to meet with Russian government officials and possible financing partners. . . .

Into the spring of 2016, Sater and Cohen continued to discuss a trip to Moscow in connection with the Trump Moscow project. On April 20, 2016, Sater wrote Cohen, ” [t]he People wanted to know when you are coming?

On May 4, 2016, Sater followed up:

“I had a chat with Moscow. ASSUMING the trip does happen the question is before or after the convention. I said I believe, but don’t know for sure, that’s it’s probably after the convention. Obviously the pre-meeting trip (you

only) can happen anytime you want but he 2 big guys where [sic) the question. I said I would confirm and revert.”

On May 5, 2016, Sater wrote to Cohen:

“Peskov would like to invite you as his guest to the St. Petersburg Forum which is Russia’s Davos it’s June 16-19. He wants to meet there with you and possibly introduce you to either Putin or Medvedev, as they are not sure if 1 or both will be there. This is perfect. The entire business class of Russia will be there as well.”

On June 14, 2016, Cohen met Sater in the lobby of the Trump Tower in New York and informed him that he would not be traveling at that time.

Why was Felix Sater the one repeatedly identified pushing to arrange deals with the Russians and yet did not face any subsequent charges by the Mueller team? Sater had been working as part of the Trump team since 2003. Why is it that the proposed deals and travel to Moscow came predominantly from Felix Sater? As I noted in my previous piece – [The FBI Tried and Failed to Entrap Trump](#) – Sater was an active FBI undercover informant. He had been working with the FBI since 1998. When he agreed to start working as an undercover informant aka cooperator in December 1998 guess who signed off on the deal? Andrew Weissman, a member of Mueller’s special counsel team. You can see the [deal here](#). It was signed Dec. 10, 1998.

An honest prosecutor would have and should have disclosed this fact. He, Sater, was the one encouraging the Trump team to cozy up to Russia. Mueller does not disclose one single

instance of Trump or Cohen or any of the Trump kids calling Sater on the carpet and chewing his ass for not bringing them deals and not opening doors in Russia. Omitting this key fact goes beyond simple disingenuity. It is a conscious lie.

The circumstantial evidence indicates that Sater was doing this at the behest of FBI handlers. We do not yet know who they are.

But Sater's behavior and status as an FBI Informant was not an isolated incident. We also have the case of Michael Caputo and Roger Stone being approached by a Russian gangster named Henry Greenberg. According to democratdossier.com:

Greenberg's birth name is Gennady Vasilievich Vostretsov, the son of Yekatrina Vostretsova and Vasliy Vostretsov. He later adopted new names twice as a result of two different marriages and became Gennady V. Arzhanik and later Henry Oknyansky. Henry Greenberg is not a legal alias, but he uses it quite commonly in recent years.

But you would not know this from reading the Mueller report. Mr. Disingenuous strikes again:

In the spring of 2016, Trump campaign advisor Michael Caputo learned through a Florida-based Russian business partner that another Florida-based Russian, Henry Oknyansky (who also went by the name Henry Greenberg), claimed to have information pertaining to Hillary Clinton. Caputo notified Roger Stone and brokered communication

between Stone and Oknyansky.

Oknyansky and Stone set up a May 2016 in-person meeting.²⁶⁰ Oknyansky was accompanied to the meeting by Alexei Rasin, a Ukrainian associate involved in Florida real estate. At the meeting, Rasin offered to sell Stone derogatory information on Clinton that Rasin claimed to have obtained while working for Clinton. Rasin claimed to possess financial statements demonstrating Clinton's involvement in money laundering with Rasin's companies. According to Oknyansky, Stone asked if the amounts in question totaled millions of dollars but was told it was closer to hundreds of thousands. Stone refused the offer, stating that Trump would not pay for opposition research.

How does a guy like Vorkretsov/Greenberg, with an extensive criminal record and circumstantial ties to the Russian mob gain entrance into the United States? Very simple answer. He too was an FBI informant, according to the democrat dossier:

In an affidavit, Vostretsov explained to an immigration judge he worked for the FBI for 17 years throughout the world, including in the US, Iran and North Korea. He explained in the same paperwork the FBI granted him several temporary visas to visit the US in exchange for information about criminal activities.

Please take time to read the full dossier at democrat dossier.

This is more than an odd coincidence. This is a pattern. The FBI was targeting the Trump campaign and personnel in a

deliberate effort to implicate them in wanting to work with Russians.

And there is more. George Papadopoulos, a member of the Trump campaign, was entrapped by individuals linked to British MI-6 and the CIA with offers to provide meetings with Russians and Putin. The Mueller account is a lie. Here is another section of it:

In late April 2016, Papadopoulos was told by London-based professor Joseph Mifsud, immediately after Mifsud 's return from a trip to Moscow, that the Russian government had obtained "dirt" on candidate Clinton in the form of thousands of emails. One week later, on May 6, 2016, Papadopoulos suggested to a representative of a foreign government that the Trump Campaign had received indications from the Russian government that it could assist the Campaign through the anonymous release of information that would be damaging to candidate Clinton.

Papadopoulos shared information about Russian "dirt " with people outside of the Campaign, and the Office investigated whether he also provided it to a Campaign official. Papadopoulos and the Campaign officials with whom he interacted told the Office that they did not recall that Papadopoulos passed them the information. Throughout the relevant period of time and for several months thereafter, Papadopoulos worked with Mifsud and two Russian nationals to arrange a meeting between the Campaign and the Russian government. That meeting never came to pass.

Once again, the Mueller team treats the provocateur – i.e., Joseph Mifsud – as some simple guy with ties to Russia’s political elites. Another egregious lie. Mifsud was not working on behalf of Russia. He was deployed by MI-6. *Disobedient Media* has been on the forefront of exposing Mifsud’s ties to Western intelligence in general and the Brits in particular. Quoting now from *Disobedient Media*:

Mifsud’s alleged links to Russian intelligence are summarily debunked by his close working relationship with Claire Smith, a major figure in the upper echelons of British intelligence. A number of Twitter users recently observed that Joseph Mifsud had been photographed standing next to Claire Smith of the U.K. Joint Intelligence Committee at Mifsud’s LINK campus in Rome. *Newsman* and *Buzzed* later reported that the professor’s name and biography had been removed from the campus website, writing that the mysterious removal took place after Mifsud had served the institution for “years.”

WikiLeaks Editor-in-Chief Julian Assange likewise noted the connection between Mifsud and Smith in a Twitter thread, additionally pointing out his connections with Saudi intelligence: “[Mifsud] and Claire Smith of the UK Joint Intelligence Committee and eight-year member of the UK Security Vetting panel both trained Italian security services at the Link University in Rome and appear to both be present in this [photo].”

The photograph in question originated on Geodiplomatics.com, where it specified that Joseph Mifsud is indeed standing next to Claire Smith, who was attending a: “...Training program on International Security which was organised by Link Campus University and London Academy of

Diplomacy.” The event is listed as taking place in October 2012.

This is not a mere matter of Mueller and his team “failing” to disclose some important facts. If they were operating honestly, they should have investigated Mifsud, Greenberg and Sater. But they did not. Two of the three alleged Russian stooges – Sater and Greenberg – have ties to the FBI. And Mifsud has been living and working in the belly of the intelligence community.

When you put these facts together it is clear that there is real meat on the bone for Barr’s upcoming investigation of the “spying” that was being done on the Trump campaign by law enforcement and intelligence. These facts must become a part of the public consciousness. The foreign country that worked feverishly to meddle in the 2016 presidential election and the subsequent rule of Donald Trump is the United Kingdom. Russia is the patsy.

Larry C. Johnson is a former CIA analyst and counterterrorism official at the State Department. This article first appeared on [*Sic Semper Tyrannis*](#).

PEPE ESCOBAR: War on Iran & Calling America’s Bluff

Vast swathes of the West seem not to realize that if the Strait of Hormuz is shut down a global depression will follow, writes Pepe Escobar.

By [**Pepe Escobar**](#)

Special to Consortium News



The Trump administration once again has graphically demonstrated that in the young, turbulent 21st century, “international law” and “national sovereignty” already belong to the Realm of the Walking Dead.

As if a deluge of sanctions against a great deal of the planet was not enough, the latest “offer you can’t refuse” conveyed by a gangster posing as diplomat, Consul Minimus Mike Pompeo, now essentially orders the whole planet to submit to the one and only arbiter of world trade: Washington.

First the Trump administration unilaterally smashed a multinational, UN-endorsed agreement, the JCPOA, or Iran nuclear deal. Now the waivers that magnanimously allowed eight nations to import oil from Iran without incurring imperial wrath in the form of sanctions will expire on May 2 and won’t be renewed.

President Trump’s decision to withdraw from the Iran deal upheld his highest obligation: to protect the safety and security of the American people.

Why Iran sanctions are necessary: <https://t.co/YQtmSA9hZX>
<pic.twitter.com/n5r8mhZTl5>

– The White House (@WhiteHouse) [August 6, 2018](#)

The eight nations are a mix of Eurasian powers: China, India, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, Italy and Greece.

Apart from the trademark toxic cocktail of hubris, illegality, arrogance/ignorance and

geopolitical/geo-economic infantilism inbuilt in this foreign policy decision, the notion that Washington can decide who's allowed to be an energy provider to emerging superpower China does not even qualify as laughable. Much more alarming is the fact that imposing a total embargo of Iranian oil exports is no less than an act of war.

Ultimate Neocon Wet Dream

Those subscribing to the ultimate U.S, neocon and Zionist wet dream – regime change in Iran – may rejoice at this declaration of war. But as [Professor Mohammad Marandi](#) of the University of Tehran has elegantly argued, “If the Trump regime miscalculates, the house can easily come crashing down on its head.”

Reflecting the fact Tehran seems to have no illusions regarding the utter folly ahead, the Iranian leadership – if provoked to a point of no return, Marandi additionally told me – can get as far as “destroying everything on the other side of the Persian Gulf and chasing the U.S. out of Iraq and Afghanistan. When the U.S. escalates, Iran escalates. Now it depends on the U.S. how far things go.”

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This red alert from a sensible academic perfectly dovetails with what's happening with the structure of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) – recently branded a “terrorist organization” by the United States. In perfect symmetry, Iran's Supreme National Security Council also branded the U.S. Central Command – CENTCOM – and “all the

forces connected to it" as a terrorist group.

The new IRGC commander-in-chief is Brigadier General Hossein Salami, 58. Since 2009 he was the deputy of previous commander Mohamad al-Jafari, a soft spoken but tough as nails gentleman I met in Tehran two years ago. Salami, as well as Jafari, is a veteran of the Iran-Iraq war; that is, he has actual combat experience. And Tehran sources assure me that he can be even tougher than Jafari.



In tandem, IRGC Navy Commander Rear Admiral [Alireza Tangsiri](#) has evoked the unthinkable in terms of what might develop out

of the U.S. total embargo on Iran oil exports; Tehran could block the Strait of Hormuz.

Western Oblivion

Vast swathes of the ruling classes across the West seem to be oblivious to the reality that if Hormuz is shut down, the result will be an absolutely cataclysmic global economic depression.

Warren Buffett, among other investors, has routinely qualified the 2.5 quadrillion derivatives market as a weapon of financial mass destruction. As it stands, these

derivatives are used – illegally – to drain no less than a trillion U.S. dollars a year out of the market in manipulated profits.

Considering historical precedents, Washington may eventually be able to set up a Persian Gulf of Tonkin false flag. But what next?

If Tehran were totally cornered by Washington, with no way out, the de facto nuclear option of shutting down the Strait of Hormuz would instantly cut off 25 percent of the global oil supply. Oil prices could rise to over \$500 a barrel, to even \$1000 a barrel. The 2.5 quadrillion of derivatives would start a chain reaction of destruction.

Unlike the shortage of credit during the 2008 financial crisis, the shortage of oil could not be made up by fiat instruments. Simply because the oil is not there. Not even Russia would be able to re-stabilize the market.

It's an open secret in private conversations at the Harvard Club – or at Pentagon war-games for that matter – that in case of a war on Iran, the U.S. Navy would not be able to keep the Strait of Hormuz open.

Russian SS-NX-26 Yakhont missiles – with a top speed of Mach 2.9 – are lining up the Iranian northern shore of the Strait of Hormuz. There's no way U.S. aircraft carriers can defend a barrage of Yakhont missiles.

Then there are the SS-N-22 Sunburn supersonic anti-ship missiles – already exported to China and India – flying ultra-low at 1,500 miles an hour with dodging capacity, and extremely mobile; they can be fired from a flatbed truck,

and were designed to defeat the U.S. Aegis radar defense system.

What Will China Do?

The full-frontal attack on Iran reveals how the Trump administration bets on breaking Eurasia integration via what would be its weakest node; the three key nodes are China, Russia and Iran. These three actors interconnect the whole spectrum; Belt and Road Initiative; the Eurasia Economic Union; the Shanghai Cooperation Organization; the International North-South Transportation Corridor; the expansion of BRICS Plus.

So there's no question the Russia-China strategic partnership will be watching Iran's back. It's no accident that the trio is among the top existential "threats" to the U.S., according to the Pentagon. Beijing knows how the U.S. Navy is able to cut it off from its energy sources. And that's why Beijing is strategically increasing imports of oil and natural gas from Russia; engineering the "escape from Malacca" also must take into account a hypothetical U.S. takeover of the Strait of Hormuz.

A plausible scenario involves Moscow acting to defuse the extremely volatile U.S.-Iran confrontation, with the Kremlin and the Ministry of Defense trying to persuade President Donald Trump and the Pentagon from any direct attack against the IRGC. The inevitable counterpart is the rise of covert ops, the possible staging of false flags and all manner of shady Hybrid War techniques deployed not only against the IRGC, directly and indirectly, but against Iranian interests everywhere. For all practical purposes, the U.S. and Iran

are at war.

Within the framework of the larger Eurasia break-up scenario, the Trump administration does profit from Wahhabi and Zionist psychopathic hatred of Shi'ites. The "maximum pressure" on Iran counts on Jared of Arabia Kushner's close WhatsApp pal Mohammad bin Salman (MbS) in Riyadh and MbS's mentor in Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed, to replace the shortfall of Iranian oil in the market. But that's nonsense – as quite a few wily Persian Gulf traders are adamant Riyadh won't "absorb Iran's market share" because the extra oil is not there.

Much of what lies ahead in the oil embargo saga depends on the reaction of assorted vassals and semi-vassals. Japan won't have the guts to go against Washington. Turkey will put up a fight. Italy, via Salvini, will lobby for a waiver. India is very complicated; New Delhi is investing in Iran's Chabahar port as the key hub of its own Silk Road, and closely cooperates with Tehran within the INSTC framework. Would a shameful betrayal be in the cards?

China, it goes without saying, will simply ignore Washington.

Iran will find ways to get the oil flowing because the demand won't simply vanish with a magic wave of an American hand. It's time for creative solutions. Why not, for instance, refuel ships in international waters, accepting gold, all sorts of cash, debit cards, bank transfers in rubles, yuan, rupees and rials – and everything bookable on a website?

Now that's a way Iran can use its tanker fleet to make a

killing. Some of the tankers could be parked in – you got it – the Strait of Hormuz, with an eye on the price at Jebel Ali in the UAE to make sure this is the real deal. Add to it a duty free for the ships crews. What's not to like? Ship owners will save fortunes on fuel bills, and crews will get all sorts of stuff at 90 percent discount in the duty free.

And let's see whether the EU has grown a spine – and really turbo-charge their [Special Purpose Vehicle \(SPV\)](#) alternative payment network conceived after the Trump administration ditched the JCPOA. Because more than breaking up Eurasia integration and implementing neocon regime change, this is about the ultimate anathema; Iran is being mercilessly punished because it has bypassed the U.S. dollar on energy trade.

Pepe Escobar, a veteran Brazilian journalist, is the correspondent-at-large for Hong Kong-based [Asia Times](#). His latest book is ["2030."](#) Follow him on [Facebook](#).

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