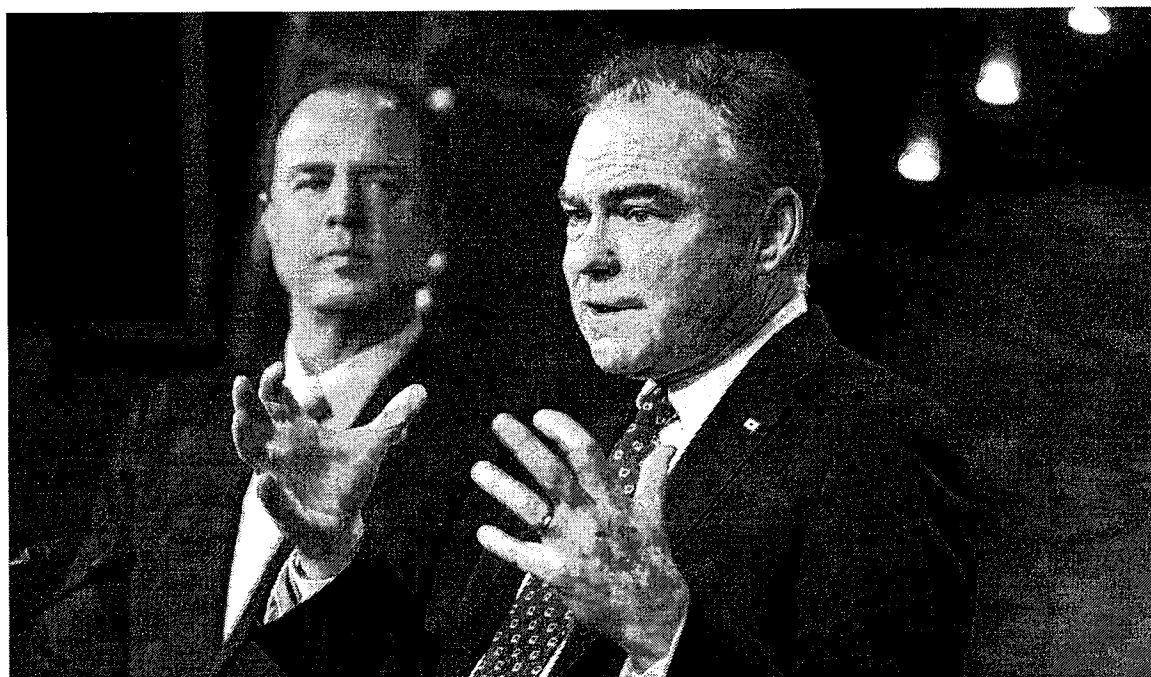


Democrats intentionally used disinformation from Russia to attack Trump, campaign aides



Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., right, accompanied by Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., gestures during a news conference on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2015, to reflect on President Barack Obama's request to Congress to authorize military force against Islamic ... more >

By Rowan Scarborough - *The Washington Times* - Tuesday, July 11, 2017

While the mainstream news media hunts for evidence of Trump-Russia collusion, the public record shows that Democrats have willfully used Moscow disinformation to influence the presidential election against Donald Trump and attack his administration.

The disinformation came in the form of a Russian-fed dossier written by former British intelligence agent Christopher Steele. It contains a series of unverified criminal charges against Mr. Trump's campaign aides, such as coordinating Moscow's hacking of Democratic Party computers.

Some Democrats have widely circulated the discredited information. Mr. Steele was paid by the Democrat-funded opposition research firm Fusion GPS with money from a Hillary Clinton backer. Fusion GPS distributed the dossier among Democrats and journalists. The information fell into the hands of the FBI, which used it in part to investigate Mr. Trump's campaign aides.

Mr. Steele makes clear that his unproven charges came almost exclusively from sources linked to the Kremlin and Russian President Vladimir Putin. He identified his sources as "a senior Russian Foreign Ministry figure," a former "top level Russian intelligence officer active inside the Kremlin," a "senior Kremlin official" and a "senior Russian government official."

The same Democrats who have condemned Russia's election interference via plying fake news and hacking email servers have quoted freely from the Steele anti-Trump memos derived from creatures of the Kremlin.

In other words, there is public evidence of significant, indirect collusion between Democrats and Russian disinformation, a Trump supporter said.

"If anyone colluded with the Russians, it was the Democrats," said a former Trump campaign adviser who asked not to be identified because of the pending investigations. "After all, they've routinely shopped around false claims from the debunked Steele dossier, which listed sources including senior Kremlin officials. If anyone should be investigated in Washington, it ought to be Adam Schiff, Eric Swalwell, Mark Warner and their staffers."

That is a reference to Rep. Adam B. Schiff of California, the top Democrat on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence; Sen. Mark R. Warner, Virginia Democrat and vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence; and Rep. Eric Swalwell, a California, Democrat on the House intelligence panel.

By his own admission, Mr. Steele's work has proved unreliable.

As first reported by The Washington Times on April 25, Mr. Steele filed a document in a sealed court case in London acknowledging that a major dossier charge about hacking Democrats' computers was unverified. The entire dossier never should have been made public and Fusion GPS should not have passed it around, Mr. Steele said in a filing defending himself against a libel charge.

About Carter Page

Other dossier targets vehemently deny the dirt thrown by the Kremlin sources.

Mr. Steele's Russian sources accused Mr. Trump's attorney, Michael Cohen, of attending a meeting with Russian agents in Prague to cover up their role in Moscow's hacking. Mr. Cohen has said he has never been to Prague and was in California at the time.

One of the main targets of Mr. Steele's Russian sources is Carter Page, who lived and worked in Moscow as a Merrill Lynch investor. He had loose ties to the Trump campaign as a foreign policy adviser and surrogate.

Mr. Steele's Russian sources accused Mr. Page of a series of crimes: teaming up with former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort to help Russia hack Democratic computers, meeting in Moscow with two Putin cronies to plot against Mrs. Clinton and working out a shady brokerage deal with a Russian oligarch.

Mr. Page told The Washington Times that he has never met Mr. Manafort, knew nothing about Russian hacking when it was happening, never met the two Russians named by Mr. Steele and never completed the supposed investment deal.

The dossier accusations against Mr. Page surfaced during the campaign in a Yahoo News story, citing not Mr. Steele but intelligence sources. It then went out on the U.S. government's Voice of America.

In the meantime, the Clinton campaign used the Yahoo story to attack Mr. Trump: "Hillary for America Statement on Bombshell Report About Trump Aide's Chilling Ties to Kremlin," blared the Clinton campaign's Sept. 23 press release.

Since the dossier was circulated widely among Democrats, Mr. Page said, he believes the Clinton team possessed it and relied on it based on what some of Mrs. Clinton's surrogates said publicly.

"After the report by Yahoo News, the Clinton campaign put out an equally false press release just minutes after the article was released that afternoon," said Mr. Page, who has tracked what he believes is a series of inaccurate stories and accusations against him.

"Of course, the [Clinton campaign representatives] were lying about it with the media nonstop for many months, and they've continued until this day," Mr. Page said. "Both indirectly as they planted articles in the press and directly with many TV appearances."

Democrats cite Russia's dirt

Even before the Yahoo story, then-Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, Nevada Democrat, was using the Russian-sourced dossier.

On Aug. 27, with the campaign in high gear and knowledge that Russian hackers had penetrated Clinton campaign computers in the public domain, Mr. Reid released a letter to then-FBI Director James B. Comey.

Mr. Reid called for an investigation into Mr. Page's trip to Moscow, where he supposedly "met with high-ranking sanctioned individuals. Any such meetings should be investigated and made part of the public record."

Mr. Reid's evidence surely came from the dossier and its Russian sources.

In the dossier, Mr. Steele clearly states that his anti-Trump accusations are from the Kremlin, which means some Democrats have been willingly repeating Moscow propaganda for public consumption in Washington.

No Democrats have embraced the Russian-sourced dossier more than members of the House intelligence committee, which is investigating Moscow's interference in the election.

Mr. Schiff read from the dossier extensively at a March hearing featuring Mr. Comey and Navy Adm. Michael Rogers, who leads the National Security Agency.

As Mr. Schiff and other Democrats were bemoaning Kremlin activities against Mrs. Clinton, they were more than willing to quote Kremlin sources attacking Mr. Trump during the election campaign.

Mr. Schiff lauded Mr. Steele for disclosing that Rosneft, a Russian-owned gas and oil company, planned to sell a 19.5 percent share to an investor and that Mr. Page was offered a brokerage fee.

Trouble is, the 19.5 percent share was announced publicly by Moscow before Mr. Steele wrote that memo. Mr. Page said he was never involved in any talk about a commission.

Mr. Schiff was more than willing to quote Kremlin sources.

"According to Steele's Russian sources, the campaign has offered documents damaging to Hillary Clinton, which the Russians would publish through an outlet that gives them deniability like WikiLeaks," he said.

Mr. Schiff also said: "According to Christopher Steele, a former British intelligence officer, who is reportedly held in high regard by U.S. intelligence, Russian sources tell him that Page has also had a secret meeting with Igor Sechin, CEO of the Russian gas giant, Rosneft. Sechin is reported to be a former KGB agent and close friend of Putin's."

Mr. Page has said repeatedly that he does not know Mr. Sechin and did not meet with him in Moscow.

Meanwhile, Rep. Joaquin Castro of Texas, another Democrat on the House committee, lauded Mr. Steele's Kremlin sourcing.

"I want to take a moment to turn to the Christopher Steele dossier, which was first mentioned in the media just before the election and published in full by media outlets in January," Mr. Castro said. "My focus today is to explore how many claims within Steele's dossier are looking more and more likely, as though they are accurate.

"This is not someone who doesn't know how to run a source and not someone without contacts. The allegations it raises about President Trump's campaign aides' connections to Russians, when overlaid with known established facts and timelines from the 2016 campaign, are very revealing," he said.

Rep. Andre Carson, Indiana Democrat, said: "There's a lot in the dossier that is yet to be proven, but increasingly as we'll hear throughout the day, allegations are checking out."

On MSNBC in March, Rep. Maxine Waters, California Democrat, said she believed the dossier section on Mr. Trump and supposed sex acts with prostitutes in Moscow were true.

"Oh, I think it should be taken a look at," she said. "I think they should really read it, understand it, analyze it and determine what's fact, what may not be fact. We already know that the part about the coverage that they have on him with sex actions is supposed to be true. They have said that that's absolutely true. Some other things they kind of allude to. Yes, I think he should go into that dossier and see what's there."

Fusion GPS widely circulated the dossier during the presidential race. The public got its first glance when the news site BuzzFeed posted it online in January, with its editor saying he doubted it was true.

One person who says he knows it is a fabrication is Russian entrepreneur Aleksej Gubarev.

The dossier quotes Russian sources as saying Mr. Gubarev's technology company, XBT, used botnets to flood Democratic computers with porn and spying devices.

Mr. Gubarev is suing Mr. Steele for libel in London and is suing BuzzFeed in Florida.

It is in the London case that Mr. Steele acknowledged that his memo on Mr. Gubarev was unverified.