

REPUBLICANS PREPARE TO ACCUSE HILLARY OF RUSSIAN TIES

In Monday's hearing, Devin Nunes asked Jim Comey for reassurances that if anyone – including a member of the public – brought allegations of Russian attempts to infiltrate the Hillary campaign to the FBI, the FBI would expand the investigation to include those efforts as well.

NUNES: Director Comey, you announced this morning that there'll be an investigation into Trump associates possible and President Trump and anyone around the campaign and any association with the Russian government.

If this committee or anyone else for that matter, someone from the public, comes with information to you about the Hillary Clinton campaign or their associates or someone from the Clinton Foundation, will you add that to your investigation? They have ties to Russian intelligence services, Russian agents, would that be something of interest to you?

COMEY: People bring us information about what they think is improper unlawful activity of any kind, we will evaluate it. Not just in – not just in this context. Folks send us stuff all the time. They should keep going that.

NUNES: Do you think it's possible that the Russians would not be trying to infiltrate Hillary Clinton's campaign, get information on Hillary Clinton and try to get to people that are around that campaign or the Clinton Foundation?

COMEY: I'm not prepared to comment about the particular campaigns but the Russians in general are always trying to

understand who the future leaders might be and what levers of influence there might be on them.

NUNES: I just hope that if – if information does surface about the other campaigns, not even just Hillary Clinton's but any other campaigns, that you would take that serious also if the Russians were trying to infiltrate those campaigns around them.

COMEY: Of course we would.

Yesterday, Politico reported that the RNC paid an intelligence firm that employs a former KGB officer dig up dirt on Hillary.

The payments attracted attention in political and intelligence circles, largely because the Virginia-based firm, Hamilton Trading Group, had particular expertise in Russia, which was emerging as a major campaign issue at the time.

RNC officials and the president and co-founder of Hamilton Trading Group, an ex-CIA officer named Ben Wickham, insisted the payments, which eventually totaled \$41,500, had nothing to do with Russia.

[snip]

But RNC officials now acknowledge that most of the cash – \$34,100 – went towards intelligence-style reports that sought to prove conflicts of interest between Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's tenure as Secretary of State and her family's foundation.

The firm produced two dossiers that tried to make the case that Clinton intervened in Bulgaria and Israel, respectively, on behalf of energy companies that had donated to the Clinton Foundation, according to people

briefed on the reports.

The oppo firm's story has been evolving, but thus far, it seems that the former KGB officer, Gennady Vasilenko, did not work on the Hillary project. That said, remember that the Christopher Steele dossier (which is effectively the Clinton counterpart to this oppo project) indicated that Russia held compromising information on Hillary. We don't know if that was included in the earlier reports shared with Steele's first, Republican client. If it was, I could imagine the RNC trying to replicate the same information via a different source.

Meanwhile, serial fabulist oppo hit man Jerome Corsi has a piece at Infowars purporting to explain Roger Stone's August 21, 2016 tweet stating "it would soon be Podesta's time in the barrel." Corsi includes two reports from last summer – one done by Government Accountability Institute and another by himself in response to the Paul Manafort allegations – alleging ties between Hillary and Podesta and Russia.

When this article was published, I suggested to Roger Stone that the attack over Manafort's ties to Russia needed to be countered.

My plan was to publicize the Government Accountability Institute's report, "From Russia With Money," that documented how Putin paid substantial sums of money to both Hillary Clinton and John Podesta.

Putin must have wanted Hillary to win in 2016, if only because Russian under-the-table cash payments to the Clintons and to Podesta would have made blackmailing her as president easy.

On Aug. 14, 2016, I began researching for Roger Stone a memo that I entitled "Podesta."

I completed that memo on Aug. 31, 2016, and is embedded here in its entirety.

It's not clear Corsi's explanation works to absolve Stone: while the earlier (July 31) report does focus on John Podesta, Corsi's August 31 report focuses primarily on John's brother Tony.

But it does dig out these Russian allegations just after Nunes raised the possibility private citizens might provide FBI with evidence implicating the Hillary campaign.

I'd say this is all ridiculous, and within the counterintelligence department it probably is, but remember that similar allegations from Steve Bannon got the NY office of the FBI chasing after the Clinton Foundation for months and months.