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Dispute Over CIA Claim Russia Tried to Get Trump Elected

The CIA has lent credence to Hillary Clinton's claim that Russia was behind the thousands of leaked e-mails that caused her campaign and the Democratic National Committee (DNC) so much embarrassment when they were published by WikiLeaks, and her claim that the purpose of the leaks was to help get Donald Trump elected. The liberal mainstream media have reported on this in a series of misleading headlines that approach the level of click-bait. Here is just a sampling:



- "Russian Hackers Acted to Aid Trump in Election, U.S. Says" (*New York Times*, December 9)
- "Obama orders full review of Russian hacking during the 2016 election" (*Los Angeles Times*, December 9)
- "Russian hacking and the 2016 election, explained" (CNN, December 12)
- "Inside the Russian Hacking Scandal and Trump's Election" (ABC News, December 12)

While the reader would not get very far into these articles before realizing that what is being reported is that Russian hackers provided the materials published by WikiLeaks and that the motivation was to get Trump elected, the fact remains that in a world where perception is driven — at least in large part — by social media posts made up of headlines, any reader who incorrectly *perceived* that Russia "hacked" the election for Trump by penetrating voting machines and election tabulations can easily be forgiven his erroneous conclusion.

So if hackers (whether Russian or otherwise) did *not* hack voting machines or change the way votes were counted, what exactly are the media saying happened? To answer that question, one has to look at what the CIA claims happened. As the *Washington Post* reported under the headline "Secret CIA assessment says Russia was trying to help Trump win White House" in an article for December 10:

The CIA has concluded in a secret assessment that Russia intervened in the 2016 election to help Donald Trump win the presidency, rather than just to undermine confidence in the U.S. electoral system, according to officials briefed on the matter.

Intelligence agencies have identified individuals with connections to the Russian government who provided WikiLeaks with thousands of hacked emails from the Democratic National Committee and others, including Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman, according to U.S. officials. Those officials described the individuals as actors known to the intelligence community and part of a wider Russian operation to boost Trump and hurt Clinton's chances.

The article went on to say:

"It is the assessment of the intelligence community that Russia's goal here was to favor one candidate over the other, to help Trump get elected," said a senior U.S. official briefed on an intelligence



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presentation made to U.S. senators. “That’s the consensus view.”

The close fit between the recent allegations of the CIA and earlier accusations made by Clinton throughout her race against Donald Trump leads the observer to one of three conclusions: 1) Clinton is psychic; 2) Clinton had an inside track into the “secret CIA assessment”; or 3) Clinton — *or the insiders who want her in power* — orchestrated the “secret CIA assessment” as a last-ditch effort to either convince Electoral College electors to dump Trump and elect Clinton just to spite Russia or *at least* to “delegitimize” the election results. Since it is outside the realm of possibility that Clinton has psychic powers, one has to ask whether the CIA was keeping her in the loop as it conducted its “secret assessment” or whether the outcome of the assessment was tailored to benefit her and undermine the legitimacy of a Trump presidency. After all, Clinton seems to live by the maxim, “If you can’t beat them, smear them.”

A prime example of the types of allegations made by Clinton against Trump can be seen in the third presidential debate between the two on October 19, 2016. Fox News debate moderator Chris Wallace asked Clinton about comments she made to Banco Itaú about her “dream” of “a hemispheric common market with open trade and open borders.” After dodging the question by pretending that her comments were taken out of context, Clinton played the “Russian Bogeyman” card, saying:

You are very clearly quoting from WikiLeaks and what’s really important about WikiLeaks is that the Russian government has engaged in espionage against Americans. They have hacked American websites, American accounts of private people, of institutions, then they have given that information to WikiLeaks for the purpose of putting it on the Internet.

This has come from the highest levels of the Russian government, clearly from Putin himself, in an effort — as 17 of our intelligence agencies have confirmed — to influence our election. So I actually think the most important question of this evening, Chris, is finally will Donald Trump admit and condemn that the Russians are doing this and make it clear that he will not have the help of Putin in this election, that he rejects Russian espionage against Americans which he actually encouraged in the past?

It is important to note a couple of things here: 1) Clinton was “answering” a question that pertained to Clinton campaign advisor John Podesta’s e-mails, not the DNC leak. Her assertion may not have been *totally* ridiculous if she had been addressing the DNC leak; it was completely off the mark in regard to the Podesta e-mails since the reports from “17 of our intelligence agencies” addressed the DNC leaks, not the Podesta e-mails; 2) As is to be expected from someone with such an open relationship with the truth, Clinton exaggerated the facts until they ceased to be facts. What the intelligence community actually said was that the WikiLeaks disclosures of the DNC documents were “consistent with the methods and motivations of Russian-directed efforts.” That is not quite the same thing as saying “Putin himself” sought “to influence our election” and that Donald Trump would “have the help of Putin in this election.”

Besides stretching the truth past the breaking point, Clinton’s remarks during the debate are a clear example of using a strong offense as a good defense. Clinton and her comrades in the DNC had been caught red-handed doing things that were illegal, immoral, and unethical. The e-mails published by WikiLeaks were a box full of smoking guns and Clinton had to deflect the attention away from herself and toward Trump.



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A quick look at just five of those smoking guns — any of which *alone* would be damning — illustrates why Clinton (with the help of the liberal mainstream media) wanted to keep the attention on the supposed source of the leak, rather than on what the e-mails show about Clinton and her comrades in the DNC.

- As secretary of state, Clinton “reset” relations with Putin’s Russia, which helped the Clinton Foundation and its donors make millions of dollars off a deal that sold Uranium One (and 25 percent of our strategic uranium production) to Russia.
- John Podesta, Clinton’s campaign manager, is involved in a huge financial/national security scandal involving his position as an executive board member of Joule Global Stichting, a company owned by Russian oligarch Viktor Vekselberg and Putin’s state-owned RUSNANO corporation.
- Secretary of State Clinton set up multi-billion dollar deals and transfers of U.S. technology to help Vladimir Putin build Skolkovo, Russia’s high-tech Silicone Valley, concerning which the FBI has issued “an extraordinary warning” noting that Russia may use this cooperation to obtain America’s “sensitive or classified research development facilities and dual-use technologies.”
- Clinton’s own campaign staff expressed concerns about the Clinton Foundation’s “cozy relationship” with the National Iranian American Council (NIAC), a notorious group with links to Iran’s virulently anti-American regime, and a Clinton fundraising event at the home of NIAC official Michael Chegini.
- The Clinton Foundation accepted more than \$10 million from the government of Saudi Arabia and \$1 million from Qatar, even though Secretary Clinton noted in an e-mail that the Saudis and Qatar “are providing clandestine financial and logistic support to ISIL and other radical Sunni groups in the region.”

So in an attempt to shift the blame, Clinton introduced — *from stage left* — the Russia/Trump connection. By painting a picture of Trump as Putin’s puppet, Clinton seemed to hope she could gain enough points to pull ahead of him and win the election. The liberal mainstream media were only too happy to help Clinton by *over-reporting* on her allegations that Putin was behind the leaking of the damning e-mails and *under-reporting* on the content of the e-mails that was so damning. While there is concern about American servers being hacked, and knowing the source of the leaks — if it can be known — is newsworthy, the major emphasis of the media should not have been on where the e-mails *came from*, but on what they *contained*. That principle should have applied then, and it should apply now.

In the end, Clinton’s tactic of obfuscation and redirection failed and — in spite of the help she received from the media — she lost to Trump in a shocking upset. But apparently, with Clinton, it ain’t over ‘till it’s over. Echoing Clinton’s previous accusations, “The CIA shared its latest assessment with key senators in a closed-door briefing on Capitol Hill last week,” according to the *Washington Post*. In that “closed-door” meeting, “agency officials cited a growing body of intelligence from multiple sources” to the effect that “electing Trump was Russia’s goal.” The Clinton campaign lost no time in seizing the moment to demand “the declassification of all information about Russia’s meddling as well as an explanation from the Obama administration of what it knew and when it knew it,” according to the *New York Times* in an article dated December 12. That demand came not from Clinton herself, but from Clinton Campaign Manager John Podesta, whose e-mails played a prominent role in the WikiLeaks disclosures. In his statement, Podesta wrote:



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We now know that the C.I.A. has determined Russia's interference in our elections was for the purpose of electing Donald Trump. This should distress every American. Never before in the history of our republic have we seen such an effort to undermine the bedrock of our democracy.

This is not a partisan issue, and we are glad to see bipartisan support in the Congress for an investigation into Russia's role. We believe that the administration owes it to the American people to explain what it knows regarding the extent and manner of Russia's interference and this be done as soon as possible. To that end, we also support the request from members of the Senate Intelligence Committee to declassify information around Russia's roles in the election and to make this data available to the public.

Setting aside the brazenness of the Clinton campaign even using the word "declassification" in a statement, the demand seems to imply that Russia "hacked" the election. This — and the general tone of Podesta's statement — led White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest to clarify that Russia did not "hack" the electoral process or the counting of votes. As noted above, this fact did not prevent the liberal mainstream media from reporting in a way that could lead many to accept Podesta's implication as fact.

Almost immediately after the news of the CIA assessment broke, a group of Electoral College electors — almost all Democrats — wrote an open letter to Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, asking for information about any "ongoing investigations into ties between Donald Trump, his campaign or associates, and Russian government interference in the election, the scope of those investigations, how far those investigations may have reached, and who was involved in those investigations." They have asked for the information to be given to them before their December 19 meeting to formally vote for the next president.

Just in case the wording of the open letter was too ambiguous and the message — that those electors whose names appear on the letter are ready to flip their votes for Clinton — was not clearly understood, the letter goes on to say, "We further require a briefing on all investigative findings, as these matters directly impact the core factors in our deliberations of whether Mr. Trump is fit to serve as President of the United States." Of course, they did not express any doubts as to Clinton's fitness for that office.

On December 12, *The Hill* reported: "Nine Democrats and one Republican signed the letter. The Republican, Christopher Suprun, has said that he won't vote for Trump when the Electoral College meets. The Monday letter comes three days after The Washington Post reported that the CIA believes Russian hackers obtained and released, via WikiLeaks, Democratic National Committee emails to sway the election for Trump."

While the Constitution allows electors to vote however they please, regardless of the popular vote in their states, it would be a mistake to allow their judgment to be swayed by mere allegations that Russia attempted to influence the election. There are good reasons to doubt that the CIA assessment is based in anything but political motivation. In fact, retired Army intelligence officer Tony Shaffer made exactly that point in a December 12 interview with WMAL radio. Shaffer said the assessment was "purely political" and was an act of "loyalty to President Obama." He added, "It's about undermining Trump, that's what it is. It's called 'information operations,' 'information warfare,' and that's what I believe is going on." It is important to remember that this would not be the first time the CIA has run a disinformation campaign to put a preferred leader in power. Disinformation is the agency's trade-craft.



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The Trump transition team echoed similar sentiments in a short statement issued on December 9, saying of the CIA, “These are the same people that said Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction.”

While it is *possible* that Russian hackers were behind the leaked information provided to WikiLeaks, it does not necessarily follow that those hackers were directed by Moscow. It is also possible that the hackers were not Russian at all. Given the facts, it would be foolish to take the word of the CIA at face value.

Julian Assange — the founder and public face of WikiLeaks — denied in a television interview with John Pilger that Russia was the source of the leaked e-mails. “Hillary Clinton has stated multiple times, falsely, that 17 US intelligence agencies had assessed that Russia was the source of our publications. That’s false — we can say that the Russian government is not the source,” he declared in the interview in early November. As noted above, Clinton’s claims were false in that she went well beyond the facts.

Furthermore, Donald Trump has repeatedly denied any ties whatsoever to Russia. Responding to the CIA assessment, Trump tweeted, “Can you imagine if the election results were the opposite and WE tried to play the Russia/CIA card. It would be called conspiracy theory!” One need not be a Trump supporter to see that he is correct in his assertion that the Left would tar and feather anyone who used that line of reasoning to deny a Clinton victory — if she had a victory to be denied.

Regardless of who did the hacking, the crux of the CIA’s assessment was that the purpose of the hacking and leaking of these documents and e-mails was to cause the election of Donald Trump.

Perhaps the largest doubt on the veracity of the CIA’s claim is cast by the reaction of other intelligence organizations. On December 10, the *Washington Post* reported that the “FBI and CIA give differing accounts to lawmakers on Russia’s motives in 2016 hacks” and “The divergent messages from the CIA and the FBI put a spotlight on the difficulty faced by intelligence and law enforcement officials as they try to draw conclusions about the Kremlin’s motives for hacking Democratic Party emails during the 2016 race.”

And a December 12 report by Reuters under the headline “Exclusive: Top U.S. spy agency has not embraced CIA assessment on Russia hacking — sources” said:

The overseers of the U.S. intelligence community have not embraced a CIA assessment that Russian cyber attacks were aimed at helping Republican President-elect Donald Trump win the 2016 election, three American officials said on Monday.

While the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) does not dispute the CIA’s analysis of Russian hacking operations, it has not endorsed their assessment because of a lack of conclusive evidence that Moscow intended to boost Trump over Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton, said the officials, who declined to be named.

While accepting the possibility that Russian hackers (whether directed by Moscow or not) were behind the initial hacks, the FBI and ODNI do not share the CIA’s certainty that the purpose of the hacks was to put Trump in the White House.

So, while the CIA, the liberal mainstream media, and the Clinton campaign assert that Putin “hacked” the election for the purpose of getting Trump elected, the evidence does not support that claim. Of course, the facts will not likely sway those who have already made up their minds and this issue will



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probably hound Trump for months after taking office.



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