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The Story Behind the Nunes Memo

How did an unverified propaganda dossier become the driving force in a conspiracy to undermine the Trump presidency?

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candal #1

Clinton campaign and Democratic National Committee fund anti-Trump dossier.

April 2016

Marc Elias, a lawyer representing the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign and the Democratic National Committee (DNC), hires the firm Fusion GPS to collect compromising information on Donald Trump.

May 2016

Through Fusion GPS, the DNC and Clinton campaign pay former British spy Christopher Steele \$168,000 to produce a dossier of compromising information on Trump. The Federal Bureau of Investigation pays some of Steele's expenses.

The DNC allegedly breaks campaign finance laws by failing to disclose money spent on Steele dossier to Federal Election Commission.

June 2016

Steele colludes with anonymous Russian sources to produce a series of unverified reports alleging that Donald Trump had engaged in certain acts with Russian prostitutes and that the Russian government had evidence of this and could blackmail him. He also alleges that Russia "had been feeding Trump and his team valuable intelligence on his opponents" for "several years."

July 2016

Steele begins sharing his reports with the FBI.

September 2016

Steele tells Bruce Ohr, an associate deputy attorney general at the Department of Justice, that he was "desperate that Donald Trump not get elected and was passionate about him not being president." Ohr's wife works for Fusion GPS.

Scandal #2

Steele leaks to the press.

September 2016

Fusion GPS instructs Christopher Steele to begin leaking information to the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *New Yorker*, CNN and Yahoo News.

October 2016

The FBI suspends its relationship with Steele because of his “unauthorized disclosure of information to the press.”

Scandal #3

FBI relies on Steele dossier to wiretap Trump campaign.

October 2016

The FBI applies to a secret federal court for permission to spy on former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page. The FBI presents a Yahoo News article as independent corroboration of the information in the Steele dossier, even though it knows the article originated from Steele.

FBI Director James Comey signs the first of four Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (fisa) applications authorizing spying on Page. Comey would later sign two renewals, while Deputy Director Andrew McCabe signed one renewal. (A FISA application to spy on an American citizen must be renewed every 90 days, and each renewal requires proof of probable cause.)

The FBI wiretaps Page and finds nothing incriminating to justify the tap.

Scandal #4

Major media outlets use Steele dossier to stir up “impeach Trump” campaign.

October 2016

Donald Trump declines to comment on whether or not he would accept the election results if he felt they were rigged.

The Clinton campaign, *New York Times* and mainstream media outlets project that Hillary Clinton will win the election and assert that it cannot be rigged.

November 2016

Trump wins the United States presidential election.

Democrats and mainstream media begin to claim that Russia rigged the election as indicated in the Steele dossier.

January 2017

The Steele dossier is about to be made public by the media. FBI Director Comey briefs President Trump about “salacious and unverified material” in the dossier.

Buzzfeed publishes the 35-page Steele dossier.

May 2017

President Trump fires FBI Director Comey.

At the Department of Justice, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein appoints former FBI Director Robert Mueller as special counsel to investigate the accusations that Trump colluded with Russians.

Scandal #5

Democratic party officials try to prevent Nunes memo release.

July 2017

Democratic Congressman Brad Sherman formally introduces in the House of Representatives an Article of Impeachment, accusing President Trump of obstructing an investigation regarding Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election.

December 2017

FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe tells the House Intelligence Committee that no surveillance of Carter Page would have been sought without the Steele dossier.

January 2018

The FBI and the Department of Justice fight to prevent Congressman Devin Nunes, chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, from releasing his memo detailing their fraudulent use of the Steele dossier. They only produce documents to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence after Nunes “threatened to move forward with contempt of Congress citations.”

Democratic Sen. Cory Booker claims releasing the Nunes memo would be “treasonous.” He claims its release would reveal government “sources and methods” and endanger the lives of “fellow Americans in the intelligence community.”

Congressman Nunes releases his memo detailing fraudulent use of the Steele dossier by the FBI and the Department of Justice.

February 2018

President Trump declassifies the Nunes memo, making it accessible to the public.

Democratic Party officials and major media sources switch from claiming that the Nunes memo is full of “classified information” that might get intelligence agents killed to insisting that the Nunes memo is a dud that doesn’t matter. ■

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