

# The ‘dossier’ and the uranium deal: A guide to the latest allegations

---

By **Glenn Kessler** October 29 at 3:00 AM

As a service to readers bound to be confused by an increasingly complex story, here’s a brief guide to the latest developments in the tangled allegations involving Russia, President Trump and Hillary Clinton.

## The Dossier

**Background:** The “dossier” is a collection of 17 memos concerning President Trump and Russia written by Christopher Steele, a former British intelligence officer, between June 20 and Dec. 13, 2016. Steele produced his memos under a contract with Fusion GPS, a strategic intelligence firm run by former journalists.

The memos are written as raw intelligence, based on interviews Steele had with unidentified Russian sources (identified, for instance, as “Kremlin insider”), some of whom he paid for information. Raw intelligence is essentially high-grade gossip, without the expectation it would be made public unless it is further verified.

The memos, among other things, allege the Russian government had been seeking to split the Western alliance by cultivating and supporting Trump and also gathering compromising information — “kompromat” — on him in an effort to blackmail him. The memos, among other allegations, claim the Russian government fed the Trump campaign “valuable intelligence” on Clinton.

**Why It’s Important:** The dossier mirrors a separate conclusion by U.S. intelligence agencies that the Russian government intervened in the U.S. election in an effort to bolster Trump and harm Clinton, such as through hacking the Democratic National Committee and distributing materials to WikiLeaks to publish at key moments. As the official declassified report stated:

“We assess Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US presidential election. Russia’s goals were to undermine public faith in the US democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency. We further assess Putin and the

Russian Government developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump. We have high confidence in these judgments.”

Russian President Vladimir Putin intensely disliked Clinton because he was convinced that when she was secretary of state she had promoted anti-Putin, pro-democracy efforts in his country. The FBI considered the information gathered by Steele to be of sufficient importance that it considered paying him for his research, although it later dropped the idea.

**What’s New:** The DNC and Clinton campaign were revealed as the “Democratic donors” who paid Fusion GPS for Steele’s research. (Technically, Perkins Coie, the law firm of Marc Elias, an attorney representing the Clinton campaign and the DNC, funded the research.)

Separately, a “Republican donor” who had earlier hired Fusion GPS for information on Trump was revealed to be the Washington Free Beacon, a conservative website. But that earlier effort is unrelated to the Democratic-funded research that yielded the dossier, as Steele was hired by Fusion GPS after work for the Free Beacon had ended.

We should note that, in another assignment, Fusion had been hired by a U.S. law firm in early 2014 to assist on the defense against a civil action filed by the U.S. government alleging fraud by Prevezon Holdings. Prevezon is owned by Denis Katsyv, the son of a senior Russian government official.

Why is that relevant? Natalia Veselnitskaya, who was also working for the law firm on the Prevezon case, met with Trump campaign officials at the Trump Tower in June 2016, including Donald Trump Jr., campaign manager Paul Manafort and Jared Kushner, the husband of Ivanka Trump. Donald Trump Jr. agreed to meet with Veselnitskaya after an intermediary promised dirt on Clinton. She arrived with a memo containing talking points that had been previously shared by Yuri Chaika, Russia’s prosecutor general who is known as a master of kompromat.

**What’s controversial:** The Trump White House has tried to use the connection between the dossier and Clinton to claim that this shows that rather than Trump colluding with Russia, Clinton colluded with Russia. (The theory appears to be that because Steele was getting information from Russian officials in part with funds provided by the Clinton campaign, the Russians were helping Clinton.)

But that ignores the fact that DNC emails — as well as the email account of the Clinton campaign chairman — were hacked and then published by WikiLeaks as part of the pro-Trump Russian operation identified by U.S. intelligence agencies. (Wikileaks denies it received the material from Russia.) Indeed, the Wall Street Journal reported that a prominent Trump donor and the chief executive of a data-analytics firm working for Trump’s presidential campaign in August 2016 discussed how to better organize the Clinton-related emails being released by Wikileaks in order to leverage their impact.

Steele started producing his memos in June 2016, about the same time that intelligence agencies began investigating possible ties between Russia and people close to Trump. The connection between Steele’s research and official government investigations is murky, but for some Republicans it raises questions about whether the official probe begun in the Obama administration was influenced by information gathered by someone being paid by Democrats.

CNN, for instance, reported that the FBI used information in the Steele memos to obtain approval from the secret court that oversees the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) to monitor the communications of Carter Page, who Trump had said was a key adviser on national security issues. Presumably, the FBI had verified the information before it could cite it in court. Steele had quoted an “ethnic Russian close associate” of Trump as saying Page was an intermediary in “a well-developed conspiracy of co-operation” between the Trump campaign and the Russian leadership. Page has adamantly denied any wrongdoing.

Steele, during the campaign, at Fusion’s direction also briefed reporters from some U.S. news organizations, including The Washington Post, on his findings, according to court filings. Only one publication, Mother Jones, published information based on the briefing before the election.

## The Uranium deal

**Background:** In 2010, Rosatom, the Russian nuclear energy agency, acquired a controlling stake in Uranium One, a Canadian-based company that had mining licenses for about 20 percent of U.S. uranium extraction capacity. The agreement was approved by the Obama administration when Clinton was secretary of state.

Frank Giustra, a Canadian mining financier and a major contributor to the Clinton Foundation, had sold a company, UrAsia, to Uranium One in 2007. Individuals related to Uranium One and UrAsia, including Giustra, donated to the Clinton Foundation, totaling about \$145 million. Meanwhile, in 2010, Bill Clinton received \$500,000 from a Russian bank to give a speech at a conference in Moscow.

Trump, during the campaign, tossed all of these separate facts together to falsely claim that Clinton “gave 20 percent of our uranium — gave Russia for a big payment.” But numerous fact checks have found no evidence for this claim. The original suggestion of wrongdoing was first raised in a book underwritten by an organization headed by Stephen K. Bannon, a key adviser to Trump.

**Why It’s Important:** Whenever news about the Russia investigation heats up, the Trump White House cites the uranium deal in an effort to muddy the waters and suggest that Russia had gained something from Clinton in exchange for money. Trump himself has claimed the case is “Watergate, modern age.”

But there is no evidence Clinton even was informed about this deal. The Treasury Department was the key agency that headed the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States which approved the investment; Clinton did not participate in the CFIUS decision. The deal was also approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Ultimately, only the president could have blocked or suspended the arrangement.

Moreover, no uranium produced at U.S. mines may be exported, except for some uranium yellowcake which is extracted and processed in Canada before being returned to the United States for use in nuclear power plants.

**What's New:** The Hill newspaper on Oct. 22 reported the FBI had gathered evidence at the time of the sale that a Russian Rosatom official had conducted a massive bribery scheme, compromising an American trucking company that shipped uranium for Russia. The official eventually was convicted in 2015, but Republicans have said the case should have raised alarms about the Rosatom investment in Uranium One and possibly blocked the deal. But there is no evidence that U.S. officials weighing the transaction knew about the FBI investigation.

The reporting prompted House Republicans to announce they would launch an investigation. With the apparent urging of President Trump, the Justice Department gave a former FBI informant in the case approval to testify before Congress. The informant's lawyer claimed he would discuss his work "uncovering the Russian nuclear bribery case and the efforts he witnessed by Moscow to gain influence with [former president Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton] in hopes of winning favorable uranium decisions from the Obama administration."

**What's controversial:** Any suggestion that Russian money was directed to influence Clinton's decisions would be explosive. But the fatal flaw in this allegation is Hillary Clinton, by all accounts, did not participate in any discussions regarding the Uranium One sale which — as we noted — does not actually result in the removal of uranium from the United States.


(About our rating scale)

**Send us facts to check by filling out this form**

**Keep tabs on Trump's promises with our Trump Promise Tracker**

**Sign up for The Fact Checker weekly newsletter**

 **3658 Comments**

Glenn Kessler has reported on domestic and foreign policy for more than three decades. He would like your help in keeping an eye on public figures. Send him statements to fact check by emailing him, tweeting at him, or sending him a message on Facebook.  Follow @GlennKesslerWP

**Sign in to join the conversation**



Comments on this page are powered by new software that we're creating in partnership with The Coral Project. Our latest update for October includes improvements for sorting the comments section. To read more about what's new and what's coming, [go here](#).

You can email feedback to [comments@washpost.com](mailto:comments@washpost.com). Otherwise, comment below as usual.

**Please read the rules in place before joining the discussion.**

All comments (3.7k)

Viewing Options ▾

View 1 New Comment



**hhodges1** 52 minutes ago

Ho, hum. The 'facts' may even be in dispute or are incomplete. The entire Russian business is mired in political posturing with various factions claiming material facts that seem not at all clear. The 'hack' of the DNC server is still subject to investigation in that one source provided the information which can't be verified meanwhile other sources claim inside job. It will take an impartial person, if one can be found, to unwind the story. Convolving these stories into the constant stream of Russian meddling just confuses the issues. We await an independent review.

Like 👍 1   Reply ↩   Link 🔗   Report 🚩



**gmoney101101** 1 hour ago

Glenn

Your spin on this is just foul. Anyone who can type is smart enough to see that Clinton paid for the dossier, then feed it to the FBI and the press.

I know the Post is embarrassed about writing hundreds of stories on fake Trump Russia collusion but pretending that the real collusion is no big deal isn't going to help you get your credibility back. You can only do that by not being political hacks for the democrats.

This is actually an opportunity to show you guys can still do news and you're wasting it.

Like 👍   Reply ↩   Link 🔗   Report 🚩

Show 1 More Reply



**kevin briggs** 1 hour ago



Thank you for putting the use of the Trump administration's further use of more alternative facts in perspective. If there was no one out there like the good reporters at The Washington Post to report and disseminate the truth I believe the American electorate would only have the Whitehouse version of Pravda to inform their decisions and we would soon be living in a Plutocracy where Trump was CEO and chief share holder. It just frightening to consider the prospect. So again, thank you and I will subscribe as long as you keep the search for the ever more elusive truth alive.

Like Reply Link Report



**gmoney101101** 1 hour ago

if the trump campaign had paid for a dossier of dirt on Clinton sourced from Russia government sources would you think that is bad or no big deal?

Like Reply Link Report



**usmc 1-8 0321** 4 hours ago

‘muddying the waters” were the Clinton’s and the DNC. This is a big black eye for the liberals. When you lie and cheat, you eventually get hammered.

Like 2 Reply Link Report



**vangpao** 3 hours ago

You’re using the facts quite selectively, but we can only hope that lying and cheating will get the Republicans hammered.

Like 2 Reply Link Report



**Gary Oblock** 3 hours ago

Like the story said, there is no evidence to support that. Note, the Clinton Foundation in general was an embarrassment that showed a lack of judgment on the part of the Clintons but it was not criminal. Note, Trump by comparison also had a foundation that seems like it had a pattern of regularly the breaking the tax laws.

Like 4 Reply Link Report



**kcbob** 3 hours ago

Gosh! Another bot who doesn't read the article before posting Russian nonsense!

What a shock!

Like 4 Reply Link Report



**Federal%20retiree** 3 hours ago

Steele did not interview anyone. He paid a Russian to do that. Many allegations in the dossier have been discredited. People were not in the country cited for example. Gubarev is suing Steele and Buzzfeed for defamation and Steele testified that nothing was verified. Despite that, it was the basis of the wiretap of Carter Page and possibly others. Many Democrats read from the dossier in their remarks during public hearings, essentially slandering people based on DNC opposition research that was produced by Russian subcontractors. The latest reporting is that the Podesta group is the target of the Mueller investigation.

Like 👍 2   Reply ↩   Link 🔗   Report 🚩



**Gary Oblock** 3 hours ago

You'll probably know tomorrow just how wrong you are....

Like 👍 2   Reply ↩   Link 🔗   Report 🚩



**benjamin 01** 7 hours ago

The whole thing is smoke and mirrors...the best defense is a good offense?

Like 👍   Reply ↩   Link 🔗   Report 🚩



**jimb210** 8 hours ago

I'm confused. Trump and his sycophants agitate for investigations of Clinton for the, per the parties involved, unrelated sale of a Canadian company processing uranium for the US atomic industry. There is some allegation or insinuation of wrongdoing and illegal payments. Meanwhile, the Trump Organization runs a hotel in a building owned by the GSA which the Trump Organization leases, despite the lease specifically stating "no elected official of the government ... shall be admitted to any share or part of this Lease, or to any benefit that may arise therefrom," and Trump did not sell out of the Trump Organization, Trump did not place his Trump Organization ownership in a blind trust, Trump still 'owns and benefits' from the Trump Organization operating this hotel. So where is the agitation, where is Hannity and Fox "News" calling for investigations into this open violation of the lease terms? I'm confused... but not surprised, not a bit. Republican Hypocrisy - its Job 1!

Like 👍 7   Reply ↩   Link 🔗   Report 🚩



**the new bolsheviks** 6 hours ago

Jim, I know this is a late comment to your comment but to settle this argument, Trump does not directly profit from any sales or business transactions that come from his company.

In fact, Trump has already stated that he will not accept any pay from either his business or his office as president of the U.S. while he is in office.

This is no different than the Clinton Foundation while Hillary was Sec of State.

It is iffy but as far as I know, nothing illegal has occurred with Trump.

Does it need to be in a blind trust? That is no different than Jimmy Carter placing his peanut business in his mother's name while he was president Jimmy still had full ability to make his business profit while he was president and in fact Jimmy even went as far as making Georgia the peanut state while he was president and giving huge tax breaks to the peanut industry at the time.

Can we prosecute Jimmy?

Like  Reply  Link  Report 



**trey gregory** 3 hours ago

@the new Bolsheviks: To answer your question, I don't know if we can prosecute Jimmy. But I don't think it would do much good at this point...

I would have to get more details about Carter and what you're saying about the Clintons to truly have an opinion. The same goes for Trump. I know the headline, not the whole story.

But, just because someone got away with it in the past doesn't mean we should be OK with it now. I suspect Trump wouldn't risk his presidency on something as simple as not creating a blind trust. I'm sure he found a legal argument. But I do want to point something out that is probably more philosophical than legal. Just because Trump isn't profiting anything today, doesn't mean he won't in three years, or seven years. What you're describing is basically the revolving door. If Trump's company thrives while he's in office (whether he's in control or not) and he goes back to the company once he's out of office, and the stock prices are up, then Trump profits.

If Trump purposefully uses his political influence to help his company profit while he is in office, then he's simply putting those earnings on hold until he's in the private sector again. That's still a huge ethical issue. And I'm not accusing him of that. I'm just saying, hypothetically if one of Trump's companies is profiting from a government contract while he is in office then that is a potential huge problem. If the company is profiting because he's in office, that is certainly a huge problem.

Like  1 Reply  Link  Report 



Show 1 More Reply



**Federal%20retiree** 3 hours ago

Do you want the Trump hotels to discriminate and refuse service to foreigners? That is illegal too.



Like  Reply  Link  Report 



**ann husaini** 8 hours ago *(Edited)*

It's irritating that WaPo broke the Clinton / DNC payment to Fusion story, and that the first time I ever read of the Russian Uranium story was in the NYT. Both papers have since 2016 been portrayed by most conservatives as the biggest Fake News purveyor of all time. Unless they like the story, in which case it's all "I told you so, you dirty Hillary-loving liberals, now it's even in your own papers but you can't handle the truth." So boring, guys, if you're going to pick and choose then bring me the anti-Trump facts you've noticed on Fox News and taken seriously. BTW does Fox News ever break a verified story?

Like  4 Reply  Link  Report 



**kalapootchie pup** 8 hours ago

"BTW does Fox News ever break a verified story?"


No.

Like  5 Reply  Link  Report 



**clg238** 5 hours ago


You can read the dossier, written by an ex high-level British agent, on BuzzFeed.

Like  Reply  Link  Report 



**Federal%20retiree** 3 hours ago

It's not about the Uranium it's about the bribes the Russians were paying, hence the title of the scandal Clinton Cash.

Like  Reply  Link  Report 

Show 1 More Reply

Show 1 More Reply



**JEllis62** 9 hours ago

More conservative BS!

Like  3 Reply  Link  Report 



**gerald eisenhower** 9 hours ago



I'm always happy to see Trump and his 'zoids bring up the uranium non-issue, one of the most thoroughly debunked non-issues of all time. It means they're feeling the dogs at their heels and are getting desperate for deflections.