

THE COST OF THE LAWFARE SURROUNDING THE STEELE DOSSIER WILL VASTLY OUTSTRIP ITS ORIGINAL COST

In response to Monday's server hiccups and in anticipation that Mueller is nowhere near done, we expanded our server capacity overnight. If you think you'll rely on emptywheel reporting on the Mueller probe, please consider a donation to support the site.

Yesterday, Reuters reported that Fusion GPS has told Congress (presumably as part of the settlement on a bank subpoena reached last week) how much it got paid for the dossier on Donald Trump, and how much of that it paid Christopher Steele for his part in the dossier. Fusion got \$1.02 million from Perkins Coie, of which Steele got \$168K.

Fusion GPS' statement said it had told Congress about how \$168,000 was paid last year to Orbis Business Intelligence, Steele's company.

The money paid to Orbis was taken from \$1.02 million it received in fees and expenses from the Perkins Coie law firm, the statement said.

There's some confusion about this number, however, with some claiming that Fusion had a huge markup on Steele's labor. But that's not right. We've now confirmed what we've seen is just part of the total dossier Fusion did on Trump. If the numbering in the dossier is any indication, there were at least 166 reports done, with 79 done between the time started on the dossier in April and when Steele got

involved in June. Of the total, we've seen just 17 released reports from Steele, or about 10% of the total (assuming none of his Russian-related reports were withheld). That would put his payment – over 16% of what Fusion got paid – to be a reasonable fraction (of course much of the rest of the dossier is likely domestic and less reliant on paid sources built up over decades).

In any case, as Reuters points out, it's far less than the \$12 million Trump has alleged.

But it's also far less than what the dossier will cost in the long run. As I've been tracking, there are a number of strands of "lawfare" surrounding the dossier – Russian and Republican attempts to use lawsuits to make the dossier toxic. They include:

- Alexej Gubarev's lawsuit against Steele and his company in the UK
- Alexej Gubarev's lawsuit against BuzzFeed in FL (with related subpoena challenges being litigated in DC)
- The lawsuit by Alfa Bank executives against BuzzFeed in DC (filed after consulting with top GOP lawyers Viet Dinh and Brian Benczkowski and their firm)
- Fusion's efforts to fight testimony and bank subpoenas in DC
- Carter Page's lawsuit against HuffPo and Yahoo

In addition, I would be shocked if Marc Elias doesn't get slapped with a lawsuit or two, now that his role in funding the dossier has become known. With the exception of Page's suit, each of those involves at least two sets of well paid

lawyers to fight things out.

Which is to say that the lawfare surrounding the dossier may well end up costing \$12 million, even assuming no one ever has to pay any penalties. Which seems to offer a lesson for sleazy politicians: If you're going to pay to develop dirt on your opponent, make sure that the blowback from it doesn't cost more in terms of dollars and damage than the actual dossier itself.