

WHAT GLENN SIMPSON SAID ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FBI

I keep promising a big post or series of posts on the Glenn Simpson transcript. And I keep doing quick posts to summarize what the transcript says about controversial topics. In this one, I'll look at what it says about whether FBI paid Christopher Steele and how the relationship went south. All told, these passages support some points I made in this post and this one – that because of the way Fusion pushed to publicize an ongoing counterintelligence investigation, the FBI got as pissed with Steele and Fusion as vice versa.

First, as I suggested, Simpson suggests (though does not confirm) FBI did reimburse Steele for his September 2016 trip to Rome to report on his findings thus far.

Q. Do you know who paid for Mr. Steele's trip to Rome to meet with the FBI?

A. I have read recently that – I think in a letter from Senator Grassley that the FBI reimbursed the expense, but to be clear, I mean, that's it. He was, to my knowledge, not been compensated for that work or any other work during this time.

MR. FOSTER: I'm sorry. You're saying that Fusion did not pay for the trip?

MR. LEVY: Go ahead and answer the question.

MR. SIMPSON: I don't think we did.

But later, when asked specifically if Steele obtained payment for the *work* he did, rather than the travel to share his work, Simpson

emphasizes that he only knows what Steele has claimed, which is that FBI didn't pay for the work.

Q. And I think you've already answered this question, but to the best of your knowledge, did Mr. Steele ever obtain payment from the FBI for actual research that he was doing on Russian interference or on possible ties between the Trump campaign and Russia?

A. He told me he did not, and I have no independent information other than what he told me. I don't believe he ever received compensation for working on anything related to Trump and Russia.

Simpson is unable to say whether Steele was providing the FBI rolling production of his memos.

Q. Do you know if he provided any other memoranda to the FBI on a rolling basis at all at any point?

MR. LEVY: He's answered that question too.

BY THE WITNESS:

A. I don't know.

In spite of Simpson saying, elsewhere, that Fusion clients get to decide what happens with their end product, Simpson claims that just he and Steele decided to go to the FBI. But his memory on this point is less than perfect.

Q. So after Mr. Steele had found out the information that he put in the very first of these memos, the one dated June 20, 2016, he approached you about taking this information to specifically the FBI, the Federal Bureau of Investigation?

A. That's my recollection.

Q. So to the best of your recollection, that request or idea came directly from Mr. Steele, not anyone else?

A. That's right.

Q. And who was involved in discussions about whether it was appropriate to take either the memo or the information in the memo to the FBI?

A. It was Chris and me. I mean, that's the only ones I remember, the two of us. The only ones I know of.

Later, Simpson's lawyer claims privilege over the question of whether Perkins Coie played a part in this decision.

Once the decision was made, did you share that decision with anyone, that he was going to go to the FBI with this information?

A. I think we're not able to answer that.

MR. LEVY: He's going to decline to answer that question.

Simpson twice describes how Steele "broke off" his relationship with the FBI (which sure makes it sound like an ongoing relationship) in terms of the frustration with the reopening of the Hillary email investigation and the NYT report that the FBI had not confirmed any ties with Russia.

A. There was some sort of interaction, I think it was probably telephonic that occurred after Director Comey sent his letter to Congress reopening the investigation into Hillary Clinton's e-mails. That episode, you know, obviously created some concern that the FBI was intervening in a political campaign in contravention of long-standing Justice Department regulation. So it made a lot

of people, including us, concerned about what the heck was going on at the FBI. So, you know, we began getting questions from the press about, you know, whether they were also investigating Trump and, you know, we encouraged them to ask the FBI that question. You know, I think – I'm not sure we've covered this fully, but, you know, we just encouraged them to ask the FBI that question. On October 31st the New York Times posed a story saying that the FBI is investigating Trump and found no connections to Russia and, you know, it was a real Halloween special.

Sometime thereafter the FBI – I understand Chris severed his relationship with the FBI out of concern that he didn't know what was happening inside the FBI and there was a concern that the FBI was being manipulated for political ends by the Trump people and that we didn't really understand what was going on. So he stopped dealing with them.

[snip]

A. I think I was just recounting that he vaguely said that he had broken off with them over this concern that we didn't really know what was going on. I'm sorry to be vague, but we just didn't understand what was going on and he said he had broken off with them.

Q. When you say "we" did not understand what 3 was going on, who are you referring to as the "we"?

A. Chris and I, mostly just the two of us. There was a lot of public controversy over the conduct of the FBI. I remember discussing it with many people, but this conversation was between the two of us.

Q. And what was the time frame of when

Steele said he had broken off with the FBI?

A. I can – I don't know exactly, but it would have been between October 31st and election day.

MS. QUINT: October 31st was when you said there was an article –

MR. SIMPSON: In the New York Times. There was an article in the New York Times on October 31st that created concern about what was going on at the FBI.

MS. QUINT: Because it wasn't consistent with your understanding of the investigation?

MR. SIMPSON: Exactly.

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q. And I think, just to be clear, this was an article you had talked about that both revealed that Director Comey had alerted Congress to something about the Clinton e-mail investigation?

A. No. That happened a few days previous. I don't know the exact date that he sent the letter to Congress, but this was an article specifically about – it was disclosing the existence of an FBI investigation of Trump's ties to Russia, which, to my recollection, was the first time that anyone reported that the FBI was looking at whether the Trump campaign had ties to the Kremlin but at the same time saying that they had investigated this and not found anything, which threw cold water on the whole question through the election.

But Simpson also admits that the FBI was pissed about seeing Steele's public reporting in the press, something I had surmised but none of Fusion's media outlets had reported.

A. I remember Chris saying at some point that they were upset with media coverage of some of the 6 issues that he had discussed with him.

Which is interesting because Simpson gets forgetful about whether the September briefings with the press – it's not clear whether they happened before or after Simpson met for the second time with the FBI – mentioned that Simpson had gone to the FBI.

MR. DAVIS: So in your meetings with journalists in September you didn't reference Mr. Steele's interactions with the FBI or passing on of information to them?

BY THE WITNESS:

A. I don't recall.

But as the citations above show, Simpson makes it clear the discussions with the press after Jim Comey's email letter did raise the investigation.

A. I'm not going to get into specific news organizations or reporters or stories, but I would restate that this was during the period when we were encouraging the media to ask questions about whether the FBI was, in fact, investigating these 24 matters.

Finally, Simpson readily admits they reshared the dossier with John McCain's associate David Kramer to make sure Jim Comey himself would get it (this would have happened at the moment President Obama asked for the intelligence report on the Russian tampering).

That was essentially – all we sort of wanted was for the government to do its job and we were concerned about whether the information that we provided previously had ever, you know, risen to

the leadership level of the FBI. We simply just didn't know. It was our belief that Director Comey if he was aware – if he was made aware of this information would treat it seriously.