

COUNTERINTELLIGENCE VERSUS CRIMINAL: GEORGE PAPADOPOULOS

While I was playing in an undisclosed location in Europe, Chuck Ross wrote two stories based off access to people in the immediate vicinity of George Papadopoulos.

The first purports to answer whether Papadopoulos [thinks he] colluded with Russia. The second reports that someone with close ties to CIA and MI6 reached out to Papadopoulos after the US government learned of Papadopoulos' comments to Alexander Downer about Hillary emails.

There's a funny movement between the two. In the first, Ross feigns concern about how long it took the FBI to reach out to Papadopoulos after learning of his email conversation.

Papadopoulos was not interviewed by FBI agents until Jan. 27, 2017, nearly six months after the start of the investigation. That six month delay is puzzling to both congressional investigators and to Papadopoulos. He has wondered to associates why, if he was actually suspected of conspiring with the Russian government, the bureau would have waited so long to contact him.

He doesn't mention, of course, that the FBI reached out to Papadopoulos just one week after the presidential transition period – which Papadopoulos played a role in – ended. That is, there was virtually no delay between the time Papadopoulos separated from Trump's retinue and the FBI investigated. That doesn't feed the outrage about FBI's investigation of politics, however, and so goes unmentioned.

Meanwhile, the second piece expresses shock that someone tied into Anglo-American intelligence reached out to Papadopoulos, Page, and one other Trump aide during the election.

Two months before the 2016 election, George Papadopoulos received a strange request for a meeting in London, one of several the young Trump adviser would be offered – and he would accept – during the presidential campaign.

The meeting request, which has not been reported until now, came from Stefan Halper, a foreign policy expert and Cambridge professor with connections to the CIA and its British counterpart, MI6.

Halper's September 2016 outreach to Papadopoulos wasn't his only contact with Trump campaign members. The 73-year-old professor, a veteran of three Republican administrations, met with two other campaign advisers, The Daily Caller News Foundation learned.

Papadopoulos questioned Halper's motivation for contacting him, according to a source familiar with Papadopoulos' thinking. That's not just because of the randomness of the initial inquiry but because of questions Halper is said to have asked during their face-to-face meetings in London.

According to a source with knowledge of the meeting, Halper asked Papadopoulos: "George, you know about hacking the emails from Russia, right?"

While Ross focuses on the FBI investigation, which started as a counterintelligence investigation, he doesn't mention the separate Task Force run out of CIA (or, for that matter, the Steele dossier, though given how shitty the dossier is on the hack-and-leak, I question whether that's what this was).

In any case, there were several investigations, even within the US, and while law enforcement has certain squeamishness about engaging in politics, our foreign allies do not.

All that said, Ross provides details about Papadopoulos' reported timeline and beliefs which are useful to understanding the events of 2016. Chief among those, he dates the meeting between Papadopoulos and Downer to May 10.

On around May 10, 2016, two weeks after the Mifsud meeting, Papadopoulos met with Downer at Kensington Gardens in London.

Ross also relays Papadopoulos' reported belief that the emails floated by Joseph Mifsud were the deleted Clinton Foundation emails.

Papadopoulos has also said he believes that the emails in question were the 30,000-plus emails that Clinton deleted in Dec. 2014 before turning her State Department emails over to the agency. Clinton's deleted records were a hot topic of debate during the 2016 presidential campaign, well before WikiLeaks began releasing emails that were stolen from the DNC and Clinton campaign.

This is entirely unsurprising (and useful for Papadopoulos to have out there). It means Papadopoulos doesn't claim to have had more advance details about the stolen Hillary emails, and instead just assumed Mifsud (and his sources) were responding to the burning issue of the day, the Hillary investigation.

The confirmation that the Republicans had early likely been fed an expectation they might have gotten those emails provides important insight on the later Peter Smith effort to get those emails, the reported outreach *by people associated with the campaign* to Guccifer 2.0 to get those emails, and Guccifer 2.0's false

claims to be leaking them. Papadopoulos likely confirmed to Mifsud that that's what the Republicans thought of as valuable oppo research, and multiple later efforts focused on making Trump aides believe they would get them.

To understand just how much Ross' sources were feeding an exonerating narrative, however, consider that he or they refused to say whether Papadopoulos passed on news of the emails to other campaign people.

Miller did not respond to the email, but it is unclear whether Papadopoulos told Miller, who currently works in the White House, or anyone else on the campaign about Mifsud's comments about emails. TheDCNF's sources did not say whether Papadopoulos told the campaign of Mifsud's remarks.

Instead of the answer to the critical issue (to which we have good reason to suspect the answer, even if it hasn't been confirmed), Ross instead passes on a non-denial denial of something Papadopoulos has never been accused of.

[S]ources familiar with Papadopoulos' thinking say he has told associates he did not see, handle or disseminate Clinton emails.

Further, Ross claims there's no evidence that meetings between Russia and the Trump campaign took place, in spite of the fact that Don Jr, Jared, and Trump's campaign manager took a meeting 6 weeks after the emails-as-dirt got floated based on a promise they'd get dirt on Hillary.

There is no evidence that those meetings took place.

To back this no collusion claim, you'd have to prove both that none of the participants in the Trump Tower meeting had heard about Papadopoulos

promise of emails (in spite of Don Jr's reference to "if it's what I think it is"), and you'd have to prove that the Russians didn't consider a meeting with the campaign manager a high level meeting.

George Papadopoulos does not, by himself, prove "collusion." But neither does this transparent attempt to deny collusion by issuing a non-denial denial disprove it. Moreover, it was never going to be the case that one person – not even Paul Manafort, not even Michael Cohen, possibly not even Trump himself – would offer the Rosetta stone on what happened in 2016.