

# IN PUTIN'S RUSSIA, TROLLS FOOL EVEN YOU

In a long story on the Russian hack that I believe falls for at least one piece of propaganda (I'm working on writing this up, but it will take time), Scott Shane and Mark Mazzetti quote Christopher Painter talking about how much people deny they've been duped by propaganda, but suggest only Trump supporters would be so naive.

He added that "people don't like to admit they've been fooled" – hence the strenuous efforts from Mr. Trump and his supporters to deny or dismiss the significance of the Russian interference.

They then use Harry Miller – a Trump supporter who got paid to organize a rally with a fake Hillary in prison – to portray the kind of rubes who fall for propaganda.

A case in point would be Harry Miller, a devoted Trump supporter in Florida who was paid to organize a rally in which a woman portraying Mrs. Clinton sat behind bars on the back of his pickup truck. It turned out that the people who had ordered up the rally, "Matt Skiber" and "Joshua Milton," were pseudonyms for Russians at the Internet Research Agency, according to the Mueller indictment.

But don't tell that to Mr. Miller. Contacted via Twitter, he insisted that he had not been manipulated by Russian trolls.

"They were not Russians, and you know it," Mr. Miller wrote, adding, "If you don't then you are the one snookered."

Here's the part of the Internet Research Agency

indictment that describes Miller getting duped.

In or around late July 2016, Defendants and their co-conspirators used the Facebook group "Being Patriotic," the Twitter account @March\_for\_Trump, and other false U.S. personas to organize a series of coordinated rallies in Florida. The rallies were collectively referred to as "Florida Goes Trump" and held on August 20, 2016.

a. In or around August 2016, Defendants and their co-conspirators used false U.S. personas to communicate with Trump Campaign staff involved in local community outreach about the "Florida Goes Trump" rallies.

b. Defendants and their co-conspirators purchased advertisements on Facebook and Instagram to promote the "Florida Goes Trump" rallies.

c. Defendants and their co-conspirators also used false U.S. personas to contact multiple grassroots groups supporting then-candidate Trump in an unofficial capacity. Many of these groups agreed to participate in the "Florida Goes Trump" rallies and serve as local coordinators.

d. Defendants and their co-conspirators also used false U.S. personas to ask real U.S. persons to participate in the "Florida Goes Trump" rallies. Defendants and their co-conspirators asked certain of these individuals to perform tasks at the rallies.

For example, Defendants and their co-conspirators asked one U.S. person to build a cage on a flatbed truck and another U.S. person to wear a costume portraying Clinton in a prison uniform. Defendants and their co-conspirators paid these individuals to complete the requests.

Don't get me wrong. I do believe that Miller was duped, just like I believe Shane and Mazzetti were duped. I believe I got duped in 2016 too!

But there's a part of the IRA indictment that might help explain why Miller got duped, one that reporters ought to chase down before they single out others for being duped, because it might help them understand how they, too, might get duped.

76. On or about August 18, 2016, the real "Florida for Trump" Facebook account responded to the false U.S. persona "Matt Skiber" account with instructions to contact a member of the Trump Campaign ("Campaign Official 1") involved in the campaign's Florida operations and provided Campaign Official 1's email address at the campaign domain donaldtrump.com. On approximately the same day, Defendants and their co-conspirators used the email address of a false U.S. persona, joshmilton024@gmail.com, to send an email to Campaign Official 1 at that donaldtrump.com email account, which read in part:

Hello [Campaign Official 1], [w]e are organizing a state-wide event in Florida on August, 20 to support Mr. Trump. Let us introduce ourselves first. "Being Patriotic" is a grassroots conservative online movement trying to unite people offline. . . . [W]e gained a huge lot of followers and decided to somehow help Mr. Trump get elected. You know, simple yelling on the Internet is not enough. There should be real action. We organized rallies in New York before. Now we're focusing on purple states such as Florida.

The email also identified thirteen "confirmed locations" in Florida for the

rallies and requested the campaign provide “assistance in each location.”

[snip]

78. On or about August 19, 2016, a supporter of the Trump Campaign sent a message to the ORGANIZATION-controlled “March for Trump” Twitter account about a member of the Trump Campaign (“Campaign Official 2”) who was involved in the campaign’s Florida operations and provided Campaign Official 2’s email address at the domain donaldtrump.com. On or about the same day, Defendants and their co-conspirators used the false U.S. persona joshmilton024@gmail.com account to send an email to Campaign Official 2 at that donaldtrump.com email account.

79. On or about August 19, 2016, the real “Florida for Trump” Facebook account sent another message to the false U.S. persona “Matt Skiber” account to contact a member of the Trump Campaign (“Campaign Official 3”) involved in the campaign’s Florida operations. On or about August 20, 2016, Defendants and their co-conspirators used the “Matt Skiber” Facebook account to contact Campaign Official 3.

During precisely the period when Miller was networking with Russian trolls to set up a real campaign event, the very same trolls using the very same fake identities were networking with actual Trump campaign staffers about the very same campaign events in the very same state that Miller was. That means it is quite possible that he had validation from real people he trusted that the trolls duping him were real.

Virtually anyone – including NYT reporters – might get fooled if the trolls duping them networked in via real trusted people.

*As I disclosed July, I provided information to*

*the FBI on issues related to the Mueller investigation, so I'm going to include disclosure statements on Mueller investigation posts from here on out. I will include the disclosure whether or not the stuff I shared with the FBI pertains to the subject of the post.*