SSCI HAS ALREADY DISMISSED ONE OF THE KEY ISSUES JOHN DURHAM IS INVESTIGATING

The other day, the NYT had an update on another area included in John Durham's 9-month investigation of the Russian investigation. Durham appears to be chasing a theory (based on what predication, aside from Bill Barr's fevered imagination, it's unclear) that John Brennan tricked the FBI into investigating Trump by fooling them into believing Russia wanted Trump elected.

> Questions asked by Mr. Durham, who was assigned by Attorney General William P. Barr to scrutinize the early actions of law enforcement and intelligence officials struggling to understand the scope of Russia's scheme, suggest that Mr. Durham may have come to view with suspicion several clashes between analysts at different intelligence agencies over who could see each other's highly sensitive secrets, the people said.
>
> Mr. Durham appears to be pursuing a theory that the C.I.A., under its former director John O. Brennan, had a preconceived notion about Russia or was trying to get to a particular result — and was nefariously trying to keep other agencies from seeing the full picture lest they interfere with that goal, the people said.
>
> [snip]
>
> The Justice Department has declined to talk about Mr. Durham's work in meaningful detail, but he has been said

> to be interested in how the intelligence community came up with its analytical judgments – including its assessment that Russia was not merely sowing discord, but specifically sought to help Mr. Trump defeat Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election.

A key part of this involves the credibility assigned to a Russian source and the CIA's initial unwillingness to share his identity.

> One fight, they said, concerned the identity and placement of a C.I.A. source inside the Kremlin. Analysts at the National Security Agency wanted to know more about him to weigh the credibility of his information. The C.I.A. was initially reluctant to share details about the Russian's identity but eventually relented.
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> But officials disagreed about how much weight to give the source's information, and the intelligence community's eventual assessment apparently reflected that division. While the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. concluded with "high confidence" that Mr. Putin was specifically trying to help Mr. Trump win the election, the National Security Agency agreed but said it had only "moderate confidence."

As with much of the Durham investigation, this likely came from a partisan investigation – specifically the HPSCI Report on Russian interference that the GOP released with little Democratic involvement. It found that

> (U) Finding #16: The lntelllgence Communi· tv Assessment judgments on Putin's strategic intentions did not employ proper ana· lytic tradecraft. (U) While the Committee found that most ICA analysis held-up to scrutiny, the investigation also identified

> significant intelligence tradecraft failings that undermine confidence in the JCA judgments regarding Russian President Vladimir Putin's strategic objectives for disrupting the U.S. election. Those judgments failed to meet longstanding standards set forth in the primary guiding document for IC analysis, ICD 203, Analytic Standards including:
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> (U) "Properly describe quality and credibilit:y of underlying sources."
>
> (U) "Properly express and explain uncertainties associated with major analytic judgments."
>
> (U) "Incorporate analysis of alternatives ·- [particularly] when major judgments must contend with significant uncertainties or … high-impact results."
>
> (U) Base confidence assessments on "the quantity and quality of source material."
>
> (U) "Be informed by all relevant information available."
>
> (U) "Be independent of political considerations."
>
> [snip]
>
> The Committee's findings on ICA tradecraft focused on the use of sensitive, [redacted] intelligence [redacted] cited by the ICA. This presented a significant challenge for classification downgrade. The Committee worked with intelligence officers from the agencies who own the raw reporting cited in the ICA to downgrade the classification of compartmented findings [redacted]

In short, in the same way that the HJC/OGR echo

chamber of shoddy propaganda injected George Papadopoulos' claims into Durham's investigation, the HPSCI report likely gave Barr a way to demand this prong of the investigation.

The thing is, however, the Senate Intelligence Committee has also reviewed this intelligence – notably, at a time after the CIA source behind it had been exfiltrated (and after abundant other evidence proving that Putin really did prefer Trump came in). And SSCI had no problem with the conclusion.

> The ICA states that:
>
> *We assess Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the U.S. presidential election. Russia's goals were to undermine public faith in the U.S. 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.**[2]***
>
> - *The Committee found that the ICA provided a range of all-source reporting to support these assessments.*
> - *The Committee concurs with intelligence and open-source assessments that this influence campaign was approved by President Putin.*
> - *Further, a body of reporting, to include different intelligence disciplines, open source reporting on*

Russian leadership policy preferences, and Russian media content, showed that Moscow sought to denigrate Secretary Clinton.

- *The ICA relies on public Russian leadership commentary, Russian state media reports, public examples of where Russian interests would have aligned with candidates' policy statements, and a body of intelligence reporting to support the assessment that Putin and the Russian Government developed a clear preference for Trump.*

The ICA also states that:

We also assess Putin and the Russian Government aspired to help President-elect Trump's election chances when possible by discrediting Secretary Clinton and publicly contrasting her unfavorably to him. ***[3]***

- *The Committee found that the ICA provided intelligence and open source reporting to support this assessment, and*

> ***information obtained subsequent to publication of the ICA provides further support.***
>
> - *This is the only assessment in the ICA that had different confidence levels between the participating agencies—the CIA and FBI assessed with "high confidence" and the NSA assessed with "moderate confidence"—so the Committee gave this section additional attention.*
>
> The Committee found that the analytical disagreement was reasonable, transparent, and openly debated among the agencies and analysts, with analysts, managers, and agency heads on both sides of the confidence level articulately justifying their positions. [my emphasis]

Significantly, over time that conclusion has held up.

In fact, an even more recent SSCI Report – released in recent weeks – makes it clear that what is obviously this same reporting stream provided the "wake up" call that led the IC to take the Russian attack as seriously as they should have. The intelligence is introduced (but entirely redacted) on page 11, but the description of Brennan's action – and the degree to which this intelligence was closely held thereafter – makes it clear that this is the CIA

HUMINT.

> According to Director Brennan, he recommended that the intelligence be briefed to the Gang of Eight, stating, “I think it’s important that this be a personal briefing.”
>
> [snip]
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> According to multiple administration officials, the receipt of the sensitive intelligence prompted the NSC to being a series of restricted PC meetings to craft the administration’s response to the Russians’ active measures campaign. These restricted “small group” PC meetings, and the corresponding Deputies Committee (DC) meetings, were atypically restricted, and excluded regular PC and DC attendees such as the relevant Senior Directors within the NSC and subject matter experts that normally accompanied the principals and deputies from the U.S. Government departments and agencies.
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> According to former NSC Senior Director for Intelligence Programs, Brett Holmgren, no one other than the principals participated in the initial PC meetings, due to the sensitivity of the intelligence reporting. Mr. Holmgren further stated that the “reports were briefed verbally, often times by Director Brennan. So I didn’t get access to a lot of these reports until the November or December time frame.”

To be clear, ultimately this more recent SSCI Report comes down on the same side that the Durham inquiry seems to be — that CIA ended up holding this too close, making it difficult for other agencies to properly vet it. This SSCI Report argues that the close hold led to a less robust response than the US should have mounted.

So all four reviews — HPSCI’s, SSCI’s ICA

assessment and 3rd volume, along with Durham's current review — agree that the CIA held this information really closely. But the bipartisan reports that assess whether the conclusion held up over time — just the SSCI ones — not only find that CIA was right, but that that view marked the belated moment when the US IC started taking the attack seriously enough.

In other words, John Durham is investigating something that the proper oversight authorities already have deemed the correct result that actually came too late and not broadly enough, and trying to find fault with it. Bill Barr is trying to get Durham to criminalize an intelligence conclusion that is the one thing that didn't lead us to get more badly damaged by the attack.