

LINDSEY GRAHAM PROVIDES YET MORE PROOF THAT PETER STRZOK DIDN'T HAVE IT IN FOR TRUMP

Lindsey Graham just released two more documents that don't show what [his personally implicated staffer Barbara Ledeen] claims they show.

The more important is the Electronic Communication memorializing FBI's 3-day interview with Christopher Steele's primary subsource for the dossier. It'll take me much of tomorrow to write it up, but suffice it to say that, as an utterly committed Steele skeptic, the EC is actually far more supportive of the dossier than I thought it'd be or than the DOJ IG Report claimed it was. Though it also provides tons of details of how it might have gone haywire, if it did.

More briefly, Lindsey also released an annotation Peter Strzok did (probably as part of his job hunting down leaks) of the February 14, 2017 NYT story alleging Trump's flunkies had close ties with Russian intelligence.

The annotation shows that Strozok found multiple problems with the NYT story. Strozok's corrections explain that,

- None of Trump's flunkies were known to have ties directly with Russian intelligence but:
 - While Carter Page had extensive ties with SVR, that wasn't during his time on the campaign

- At least one of Paul Manafort's contacts had contact with Russian intelligence
- Sergey Kislyak had contact with three people – Mike Flynn, Jeff Sessions, and one other person (probably JD Gordon)
- The FBI didn't have intercepts on people; while it had given names – that explicitly include Manafort's Ukrainian colleagues – to CIA and NSA, but did not ask for close scrutiny of them
- The counterintelligence case in which Manafort was a subject was not opened until 2016, although FBI may have had an earlier kleptocracy investigation earlier
- In February 2017, the FBI did not have an investigation into Roger Stone
- While Christopher Steele might have credibility, he didn't have much insight into the reliability of his subsources

Strzok also inadvertently revealed (by debunking claims in the story) that by February 2017, the FBI had sent out call log and credit report NSLs on Manafort, Page, and Flynn, but hadn't gotten

many of those back, and had not gotten detailed banking records. The investigation was barely begun in February 2017.

To be fair, these details were largely known, though the specificity about the NSLs is not only welcome, but unprecedented and unnecessary.

Ultimately, though, this is yet another piece of evidence – like Strzok’s observations that Flynn didn’t betray he was lying and his judgment that the Russian investigation would amount to little – that Strzok didn’t have it in for Trump or his flunkies, but instead assessed the case in real time.

Nevertheless, Strzok remains the big villain in this story.

Update: I inadvertently left off the Steele judgment above.

Update: Strzok’s Steele judgment actually shows up in the DOJ IG Report on Carter Page.

Following the January interview with the Primary Sub-source, on February 15, 2017, Strzok forwarded by email to Priestap and others a news article referencing the Steele election reporting; Strzok commented that “recent interviews and investigation, however, reveal [Steele] may not be in a position to judge the reliability of his sub-source network.”

The IG did not, however, note that this is one of several moments where Strzok clearly expressed skepticism, no matter his views about Trump, nor did it describe the other critiques he made.