

OLD MAN TRANSPARENCY CHUCK GRASSLEY CONFESSES HE COVERED UP THE ICA ANNEX FOR FIVE YEARS

Just days after releasing the Durham Report classified annex with critical details censored, Chuck Grassley released Intelligence Community Assessment appendix summarizing the Steele dossier that John Ratcliffe had declassified for him *five years ago*, then ran to Xitter and claimed *other people* had been involved in a cover-up.



Chuck Grassley 
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Americans deserve accountability on Russiagate scandal after seeing Clinton+Durham annexes I released The media+ Obama/Biden DOJ/FBI covered up the truth for 10 YRS The American ppl r hungry for answers In that same decade public trust in media plummeted 2 NO ONE'S SURPRISE

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These people are so incompetent that each new release only does more damage to their case.

The dossier appendix didn't help in 2020

Grassley released the appendix along with John Ratcliffe's cover letter, dated June 10, 2020, explaining to Grassley and Ron Johnson that, "I am writing in response to your 22 May 2020 letter seeking the declassification" of the dossier annex and the March 2018 version of the 2020 HPSCI report released weeks ago.

Grassley and Johnson asked Ratcliffe to declassify these things the day after he was confirmed, the day Ratcliffe resigned from the House where (among other things) he served on HPSCI. Ratcliffe turned around the ICA annex

just over two weeks after he was sworn in, but noted that the HPSCI Report was a Congressional Report not in custody of ODNI, and he would have to ask the HPSCI Chair – then Adam Schiff – to turn it over.

The right wing has complained that Schiff, possibly with then-CIA Director Gina Haspel, didn't release the HPSCI Report.

But Ratcliffe released the ICA appendix during the period when Senators were releasing similar documents (including, via Mike Flynn's attempt to renege on his plea agreement). And no one bothered to release this publicly. And when HPSCI Republicans updated their Report months later, they didn't bother to include the Appendix itself in the 10-page section of their report attacking the dossier.

This is not an example of transparency. It's an example of suppression.

The ICA annex proves right wing lies now

It's clear why Grassley never released the document.

There are several things in the ICA annex – as opposed to the dossier – that right wingers misrepresent. As I noted, the GOP neglected to mention the caveat in the first paragraph, noting that the dossier was “highly politically sensitive information” for which US spooks had “only limited corroboration” and so “did not use it to reach the analytic conclusions of the CIA/FBI/NSA assessment.” It turns out the 2-page annex is barely a page-and-a-half (which means between HPSCI and I we've written far more about this document than exists in the document itself). HPSCI might rightly complain that the appendix didn't describe that Steele had been closed for cause, but they misrepresent several other parts of their complaint, notably that Steele “collected this information on behalf of private clients and was not compensated for it

by the FBI” and that “multiple Western press organizations” started printing it (they got the date wrong but to get to the larger scope of Steele’s press blitz, HPSCI did over a year of persistent investigation). The GOP complained that this section had classification markers, but the most substantive ones come in the 3-bullet section that compares the dossier content to existing intelligence (and besides, when the ICA was published on January 5, 2017, Steele’s identity was not yet publicly confirmed).

Perhaps most egregiously, the HPSCI Report misrepresents what is in the ICA appendix.

It claims “the dossier’s most significant claims—that Russia launched cyber activities to leak political emails—were little more than a regurgitation of stories previously published by multiple media outlets prior to the creation of a dossier.” I pointed out how that is wildly, affirmatively false. The most immediately apparent problem with the dossier were its claims about hacking conflicted with known details of the Russian campaign.

As pertaining to hacking, though – their primary focus – it’s actually *not* that the dossier parroted things that were public.

It’s that they affirmatively rebutted the most obvious conclusions from the ongoing hack-and-leak. For example, the first and several reports completed after that all suggested that the Kompromat that Russia had on Hillary was decades old material from when she traveled to Russia, not the hack-and-leak campaign rolling out in front of our eyes. A July 26, 2016 report, released *after* the DNC release and almost a year after the first public attributions of the APT 29 hack of State and DOD to Russia, claimed that Russia wasn’t having much success at hacking Western targets, a claim that anyone briefed on those APT 29 hacks (including

the Republicans so taken with the SVR reports stolen in those hacks) would know was laughable. The most incendiary December 13 post attributed the troll campaign to Webzilla, not Yevgeniy Prigozhin. That is, the dossier wasn't just delayed; it affirmatively contradicted most of the publicly known details about the election interference campaign and even more of the details that the ICA addressed closely.

But that claim was about the dossier, *not* the ICA annex, which included the following:

- A 3-bullet section describing things in the dossier that “is consistent with the judgments in this assessment,” including
 - A bullet on Moscow’s aim, which was the excuse HPSCI used to put the dossier in the section it appears in at all
 - A *single bullet* on the dossier’s claims about the hack-and-leak, focused on Russian attempts to direct coverage of the WikiLeaks material
 - A bullet describing the dossier’s claim that Russia backed off its influence campaign as the election approached
- A 4-bullet section about

Steele's claims about Trump's flunkies, pitched as a defensive briefing

The defensive briefing section includes this complaint (it is just one of the several places where they complain how widely this disseminated, without recognizing most of that dissemination took place under Trump):

¶ The ICA analysis of the dossier also did not take the form of a defensive counterintelligence briefing, as The Director of FBI and Department of Justice officials testified. The credibility of the FBI Director's claim that the dossier needed to be included in the ICA to "warn the President that it was out there" is destroyed by the fact that the most essential evidence affecting the credibility of the dossier was intentionally omitted by FBI and CIA. ■

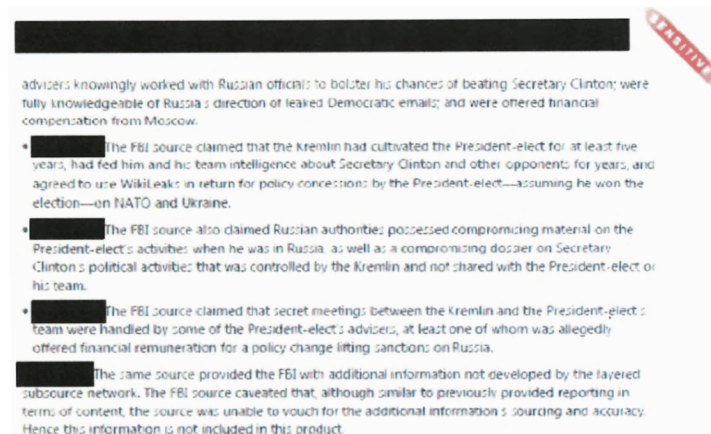
- ¶ A true defensive briefing, ostensibly to warn Trump of Russian threats to himself or his staff, would not have omitted so much key information, nor would it have excluded information on Trump's associates, such as Carter Page. ■
- ¶ It also would have been inappropriate to share defensive briefing data in a document disseminated to CIA analysts and 250 other US government officials, including appointees who were candidate Trump's political opponents. ■

I'm unclear what right wingers want from Carter Page. By the time of the ICA, the FBI knew (from Stefan Halper) that Carter Page was hoping to set up a pro-Russian think tank with funding from Russia. And if you believe Konstantin Kilimnik, Page had been wandering around Moscow just weeks earlier, claiming to speak for Trump on Ukraine.

The near-miss looks like a direct hit

But here's the most remarkable thing about the ICA appendix – which likely explains why Grassley didn't release it in 2020.

Here's that defensive briefing section:



I've long described (here's a post from 2018) that, to the extent Russia managed to fill the dossier with disinformation, they larded it with near-misses which would discomfort Trump, but help to provide cover for or deniability for the things that actually did happen. As a result, when you make a list of things that appear in the dossier but leave off the names, it looks utterly prescient (but was not). Take these bullets one by one:

The Kremlin had cultivated Trump for at least five years and fed him and his team intelligence agreed to use WikiLeaks in exchange for policy considerations. Moscow had cultivated Trump at least since the 2013 beauty pageant, far longer if you believe Craig Ungar. And not only did Russia give his campaign advance notice that they would drop emails on Hillary and offer his failson dirt on Hillary, Roger Stone credibly claimed to have advance access to WikiLeaks files (including specific files on John Podesta) and as Roger was arranging that, Manafort met with alleged spy Konstantin Kilimnik to share his strategy for winning swing states, a plan to get Manafort paid, and a plan to carve up Ukraine.

Russian authorities possessed compromising material on Trump from when he was in Russia.

The SSCI Report found several claims of a sex tape and Russia knew Trump was lying to cover up Michael Cohen's pursuit of that Trump Tower deal.

There were secret meetings between the Kremlin and Trump's advisors, and at least one was offered financial remuneration. Cohen spoke with the Kremlin directly about an impossibly lucrative Trump Tower deal. And the Kilimnik meeting with Manafort fulfills all the claims of coordination and remuneration.

In other words, once you take the names out, Steele's near-miss reports were direct hits, just in a way that distracted from the principals.

Update: WaPo describes that Tulsi released the HPSCI Report in much less redacted form than CIA wanted.