

# HILLARY'S CANDIDATE BRIEFING WAS MORE CONTENTIOUS THAN MIKE FLYNN'S

The DOJ IG Report on Carter Page revealed that FBI Agent Joe Pientka was selected as the FBI counterintelligence briefer for both Presidential candidates in 2016 in part to give him familiarity with Mike Flynn, shortly after the former DIA head became one subject in the UNSUB investigation into how the Trump campaign got advance notice of the Russian election operation.

The FBI selected SSA 1, the supervisor for the Crossfire Hurricane investigation, to provide the FBI security briefings for Trump and Clinton. 478 SSA 1 told us that one of the reasons for his selection was that ODNI had informed the FBI that one of the two Trump campaign advisors attending the August 17 briefing would be Flynn. He further stated that the briefing provided him “the opportunity to gain assessment and possibly have some level of familiarity with [Flynn]. So, should we get to the point where we need to do a subject interview ... I would have that to fall back on.”

Since then, Republicans have never stopped wailing about how badly Flynn was treated in this briefing – never mentioning that Flynn was secretly working for Turkey when he sat in on this briefing, meaning FBI should have scrutinized him more closely than they did.

The CIA just released the latest chapter of its running history of Presidential briefing, the one covering Trump. (h/t Micah Zenko)

It provides accounts of the candidate briefings

given to both Trump and Hillary. Its account of the first Trump one makes no specific mention of Pientka's investigative role. Nor does it mention that at the time Flynn was asking "tactical" questions about the Middle East, he was on Turkey's payroll.

Trump was accompanied by two advisors, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie and Lt. Gen. (ret.) Michael Flynn. The briefing team, led by Gistaro, included six of the substantive experts and a colleague from the ODNI Transition Team who was available to record and take follow-up action related to any questions that might arise and not be answered on the spot.

Gistaro led off with a substantive overview of the highest priority issues the IC was following, then turned to his colleagues to elaborate on developments in their areas of specialization. They briefed on terrorism, cyber security, counterterrorism, ISIS, the civil war in Syria, the security situation in Iraq, and the Iranian nuclear program. Gistaro recalled that he was careful to watch the clock and intervene as necessary so that the briefers each had an opportunity to say their piece but did not run over their allotted time. Nevertheless, the briefing went on for two and a half hours, longer than scheduled, and even then could not cover all the planned subjects. It was agreed that a second session was necessary.

In this first session, Trump was primarily a listener. He did ask some "big picture" questions, reflecting the fact that the material was new to him. Because several of the issues related to matters Flynn had dealt with in the military, he was the most active questioner. In Gistaro's words, "He was on his home turf." Most of Flynn's

questions were on the Middle East and were quite tactical. However, a few of his questions, especially on Iran, raised policy issues and had to be turned aside for referral, if he wished, to the national security advisor. Trump's verdict on the session was a "thumbs-up" to IC officers as he departed. Christie later described the briefing as outstanding.

Here's the FBI summary of that briefing, which focused primarily on questions about Russia, not Turkey, which might have been really useful once FBI discovered that Flynn was secretly on their payroll.

The history separates its account of the second briefing from claims Trump made about the briefing days later in a town hall by several pages.

Trump received a second preelection briefing roughly two weeks later, on 2 September, also at the FBI office in Manhattan. Again, Trump was accompanied by Christie and Flynn. This one-and-a-half-hour briefing rounded out the agreed list of topics, focusing on cyber security, Russia, China, and North Korea. On this occasion, Trump had numerous questions, some of which raised policy issues. Most, however, reflected his interest in financial and trade matters and in press reports about Russia's reported interference in the US election campaign.

At the briefing of 2 September, Trump told the briefers that he valued the first session in August and their expertise. They were surprised when he assured them that "the nasty things he was saying" publicly about the Intelligence Community "don't apply to you." Afterward, Flynn complimented the briefers in remarks to the press.

[snip]

[O]fficials were anxious to see what issues related to intelligence would arise during the debates in 2016, including whether the candidates would make direct or indirect reference to information they had received in their preelection briefings. This anxiousness was reinforced before the formal candidate debates during a quasi debate on 7 September, when Trump and Clinton were questioned, separately, by NBC newsman Matt Lauer. On this occasion, Trump made reference to intelligence briefers' "body language" in suggesting that they were "not happy" with policies of the Obama administration. These comments caused outrage in the following days among news commentators and former intelligence officers and prompted reporters to dig for information about what had transpired during Trump's briefings.

Thus, unlike with some other instances, this account doesn't make clear whether Trump was lying outright about his public comment. Notably, too, this account makes no mention of Flynn's own role in lying about the briefing, which seems remarkable given the comment about his compliment to the briefers.

Given how the history soft-pedals these issues, it makes the description of the single Hillary briefing all the more jarring.

Clinton, although feeling under the weather and unavoidably delayed 20 minutes, joined the briefers in a small secure room (SCIF, in intelligence argot) at the FBI field office in White Plains, New York, on 27 August. Given all that Clinton was going through related to her handling of personal emails during the campaign, Gistaro regretted that the first question the

security officer asked Clinton as she approached the room was whether she had any cell phones with her. The Secretary very professionally assured the questioner that she had left her cell phones at home

Hillary, of course, had been cleared of misconduct before that August 27 briefing, and was well-versed in the use of SCIFs. Yet she was treated by the security officer as a suspect.

Whereas Mike Flynn, who was quite literally working for a frenemy government during both of these classified briefings, and under investigation for suspect ties to Russia, was nevertheless freely served up answers to all the tactical questions he posed.