

Senate Intelligence Committee Promotes Russiagate Fraud

by Stanley Ezrol

July 26—Last night, a mere twenty-four hours after former Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s failed performance before two congressional committees, fake-news outlets blared out variations on the headline, “Russia Targeted Election Systems in all 50 states.” They cited the just-released Volume 1 of the Senate Intelligence Committee report titled, “Russian Active Measures Campaigns and Interference in the 2016 U.S. Election.”

Since only a highly redacted version of the report, containing no actual evidence, is available to the public, we cannot judge whether anything it said was true, but it did not say what the leading media outlets claimed. The report does state that because U.S. elections are administered independently in each state, the committee’s actual source of information was reports from state and local institutions and that they had varying levels of confidence in the raw material on which their assessments were based.

Like the parallel Mueller investigation, the Committee relied heavily on Intelligence Community (IC) sources. One of these is the disgraced ex-FBI assistant director Andrew McCabe. McCabe



Andrew McCabe, former Deputy Director of the FBI.

worked closely with the corrupt and unsuccessful Mueller team prior to being fired for unprofessional conduct including “lack of candor” under oath. Although not mentioned in his dismissal letter, he worked with a huge, blatant conflict of interest. While investigating both Russiagate and Hillary Clinton’s misuse of personal email accounts, and teamed with operatives viciously hostile to Trump and supportive of Clinton, his wife, Jill McCabe, was running for Congress as a Democrat and receiving funds from Clinton.

Was It 50 States?

The committee relied on former Special Assistant to President Barack Obama and Cybersecurity Coordinator Michael Daniel as an expert on, among other things, how widespread the reported Russian activity was. Daniel said, “[W]e become confident that we’re seeing the Russians probe a whole bunch of different state election infrastructure, voter registration databases, and other related infrastructure on a regular basis.”

Dr. Samuel Liles, Acting Director of the Cyber Analysis Division of the Department of Homeland Security

(DHS), testified, “[W]e determined that internet-connected election-related networks in 21 states were *potentially* targeted by Russian government cyber actors” [emphasis added]. Neither claimed they were certain of anything. Daniel was confident. Liles claimed only that networks in 21 states were “potentially” targeted. In fact, all networks are “potential” targets, so Liles tells us less than we knew before he spoke at all.

Before reporting their conclusion on this issue, the report states that the committee and the IC could not “discern a pattern in the affected states,” so they decide to ignore all of the “evidence,” vague as it is, and go with Daniel’s gut. “Mr. Daniel . . . had already



personally concluded that the Russians had attempted to intrude in all 50 states, based on the extent of the activity and the apparent randomness of the attempts.” They then quote Daniel saying, “My professional judgment was, we have to work *under the assumption* that they’ve tried to go everywhere, because they’re thorough, they’re competent, they’re good.” Of course, working “*under the assumption* that they’ve tried to go everywhere” means being alert and cautious, it does not mean that they actually are acting everywhere.

To sum up, the Fake News followed the “facts” from “a whole bunch” to potentially 21 to “under the assumption,” and concluded, “The Russians are coming. The Russians are coming. They’re everywhere.”

The fact that no one connected with releasing the report has yet protested its treatment in the media, means that this deceit was intentional.

What *Did* the Russians Do?

According to the report, very little was done. Throughout, they claim, “the Committee found no evidence that vote tallies were altered or that voter registry files were deleted or modified.”

They believed that the activity reported involved observation between 2014 and 2017 of election-related data that might, or might not, have been surveillance for the purpose of more intrusive activity in the future.

The most serious event described by the report is that some data was “exfiltrated” [copied] from the databases surveilled. This occurred on one named occasion in Illinois in July 2016. The report states that 200,000



voter records were “accessed,” and an unknown number extracted. DHS sent out two unclassified warnings listing IP addresses involved in this event.

Was It the Russians?

The title of the report, the page headers reading, “COMMITTEE SENSITIVE—RUSSIA INVESTIGATION ONLY,” the language in the report, and the Fake News coverage, all communicate “IT’S THE RUSSIANS!!!” but the report never claims it has conclusive evidence that this is true. On the contrary, it includes a DHS memorandum dated October 11, 2018, that says, “We have not attributed the activity to any foreign adversaries, and we continue to work to identify the actors behind the operations. At this time, all these activities were either prevented or have been mitigated.” It also reports that when DHS sent “FLASH” warnings about suspect IP addresses, it “did not attribute the attack to Russia or

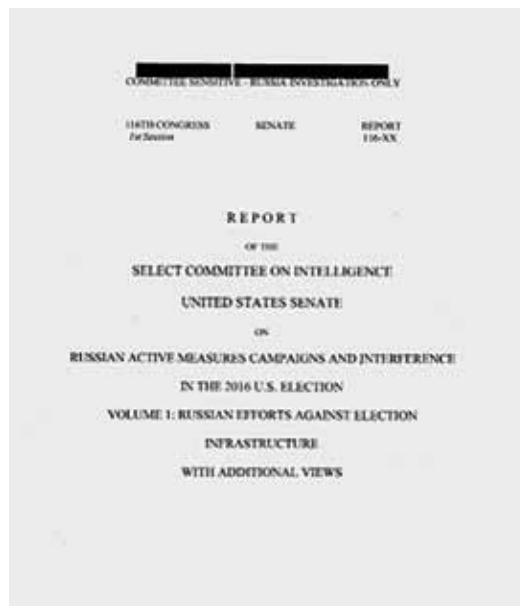
any other particular actor,” and that the second FLASH “flagged [redacted] suspect IP addresses, many unrelated to Russia.”

There may be some evidence not available in the public report, but the most we can read about it is, “In a joint FBI/DHS intelligence product published in March, 2018, and coordinated with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), the Department of State, the National Intelligence Council, the National Security Agency (NSA), and the Department of Treasury, DHS assessed [redacted] that Russian intelligence [balance of paragraph redacted].” Whatever was said, was “assessed,” not determined, and from what is made available, we cannot know what that assessment was nor what it was based on.

The report variously mentions potential actors operating from Russia including the GRU (Russian Military Intelligence), from the Netherlands, or from unspecified other locations. It does not say whether these labels are based on state and local reporting, or judgments made at the national level.

The only information on how these judgments were reached is that DHS determined its “initial assessment by evaluating whether the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) observed were consistent with previously observed Russian TTPs, whether the actors used known Russian-affiliated malicious infrastructure, and whether a state or local election system was the target.” This was only an “initial assessment” but not solid proof. Of course, knowledge of the Russia TTPs would enable a capable agency to imitate Russian operations, and we know that non-Russian actors, including the CIA, have means to spoof an IP address. The report itself mentions what appeared to be a source in the Netherlands manifesting features of Russian actors.

In a table based on state and local sources that could be expected to have less reliable monitoring capabili-



Without providing any evidence, without listing any targets, and without naming any foreign actors, the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee’s assessment is that the Russians interfered in the Presidential election of 2016.

ties than the national intelligence agencies, “GRU” attacks are cited on 15 occasions, without explaining why that label is attached or how certain they are of its validity. The report says it has discovered, “some indications the activity might be attributable to the Russian government, particularly the GRU.”

The report also indicates that some of the observed sources of attack were apparently monitoring sites having nothing to do with elections in addition to the election-related sites. This implies that some of the reported activity might be part of the general scanning for personal or other information that we know is a constant feature of the internet. If you see a shark in the ocean, it doesn’t mean it is there

specifically to eat you.

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What Did They Say?

In summary, this report claims, without publicly presenting any supporting evidence, that various entities, possibly including Russian ones and almost certainly including others, have been gaining access to data systems related to the conduct of elections. It is also reported that some data has been extracted from these sites, as has occurred with hundreds or thousands of commercial, governmental, or personal sites. That is the most destructive activity reported. These entities might have the potential to do serious damage to the election process, but they have not done so, nor is there any evidence, after years of observation, that they have attempted to do so. Like the Democratic congressmen questioning Mueller, the report is full of sound bites like “all fifty states,” that are totally unsupported by any evidence, that the authors hope will be repeated far and wide.

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