



The Institutional Infrastructure Behind Russiagate Is Starting to Unravel

“Russiagate,” as the theory that Trump colluded with Russia came to be known, consumed at least three and a half years of Washington’s attention. It officially began with the [launching](#) on July 31, 2016 of the FBI counterintelligence investigation code named Crossfire Hurricane. This was soon followed by FBI surveillance of individuals in the Trump campaign under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA).

It ended with the acquittal of Trump in his second impeachment trial on January 13, 2021. It was an extraordinarily complicated story, involving a wide variety of Washington figures, that is still being unraveled.

2021 was not kind to those who had advocated that the Trump-Russia conspiracy had taken place. By then the three key Justice Department officials who had signed the application for the original FISA warrant all admitted that they would never have affixed their names on it if they knew then what they know now.

This raises the question of why top law enforcement officials did not have the relevant information at the time they were requesting a warrant to spy on American citizens. One senior FBI official admitted doctoring evidence to obtain the original warrant. He confided that information to much of the top echelon at the FBI soon after, **but none of these officials stepped forward in those intervening four and a half years to stop the process or expose that abuse of authority.**

Two major indictments during 2021 also severely eroded the foundations of the conspiracy theory.

In September, **Michael Sussman, an attorney at the firm Perkins Coie, was [indicted](#) for lying to the FBI** by claiming that he was not working for any client when he presented evidence to the FBI in 2016. **Perkins Coie was the law firm that the Clinton campaign used to channel money to Christopher Steele,** a former British intelligence officer and the author of the Dossier which was critical to the conspiracy narrative.

The second [indictment](#) was of Igor Danchenko, a Russian national now living in the United States. Danchenko was a conduit of Russian disinformation to Christopher Steele. The indictment reinforces other evidence that senior Kremlin officials, including a former head of Russian Foreign Intelligence (SVR), were sources for the Steele Dossier. It also indicates that **some of the information was channeled through Charles Dolan Jr., a frequent visitor to Moscow who from 2006 to 2014 [handled](#) “global public relations for the Russian government.”**

According to a U.S. Department of Justice foreign agent filing, Dolan was [a named beneficiary](#) of monies disbursed and expended “on behalf of the Russian Federation.” **Dolan participated in all four Clinton Presidential campaigns:** 1992, 1996, 2008, and 2016. The indictment cites a June 2016 email which by then reveals Dolan was [operating on the assumption](#) that Danchenko “worked for FSB.” Both SVR and FSB are successor agencies to the KGB.

But the biggest sign that the sands were shifting came from the Washington Post, which is not only the newspaper of record inside the Beltway but was a major media organ pushing the Trump-Russia collusion narrative. At first the Post began with a broad acknowledgement that recent revelations meant that some of its reporting and that of other news organs on Russiagate was incorrect.

Then on November 12, 2021, the Post's media reporter, Paul Fahri, [wrote](#):

"The Washington Post on Friday took the unusual step of correcting and removing large portions of two articles, published in March 2017 and February 2019, that had identified a Belarusian American businessman as a key source of the 'Steele Dossier,' a collection of largely unverified reports that claimed the Russian government had compromising information about then-candidate Donald Trump. The newspaper removed references to Sergei Millian (the Belarusian businessman who no doubt has a libel claim here), as Steele's source in online and archived versions of the original articles. A dozen other Post stories that made the same assertion were also corrected and amended."

Then, after clearing Millian, the Post's Fahri [dropped](#) the big bombshell. *"Danchenko may have gotten his information about the hotel encounter not from Millian but from a Democratic Party operative with long-standing ties to Hillary Clinton,"* noting Clinton ally Dolan could be the unnamed operative. **In one fell swoop the Post pivoted from an acquaintance of Trump to a close Clinton family retainer, and Russian registered agent, as the source of much of the material in the Dossier.**

Although the Post carried this as a "media" story, the decision to reverse editorial policy on Russiagate was made at the top of the newspaper's management, the paper's executive editor Sally Buzbee. She was [quoted](#) as saying:

"The Post could no longer stand by the accuracy of those elements of the story. The indictment and new reporting by the newspaper has created doubts about Millian's alleged involvement. We feel we are taking the most transparent approach possible to set the record straight."

One should expect more revisions to follow.

The Post does not operate in a vacuum. Washington is a company town, and the Post often serves as the billboard by the water cooler on which the company narratives are posted. Russiagate was one of those narratives.

A wide variety of Washington players and institutions were part of the story as were multiple U.S. Government agencies. As the Russiagate narrative is revised to reflect what really happened, many people are ultimately going to be implicated. The best way to understand the far-reaching implications of the unwinding of the original Russiagate narrative is to track it from its origins. **Those origins show the many ramifications of the development of this narrative including some that reverberated all the way to the fiasco that took place in Kabul last August 2021.**

The Origins of Russiagate date back to 2010

The critical operational infrastructure which made the Steele Dossier possible had its origins in a campaign that had been on-going since 2010. That year, President Obama's Pentagon leadership elevated a one Andrew D. May to the Senior Executive Service of the Department of Defense to lead the Office of Net Assessment's "research agenda." **ONA is the highest-level strategy office within the Office of the Secretary of Defense.** While the President and his appointees set overall strategy and the military brass focuses on the tactics needed to achieve success in any given situation, ONA provides an assessment of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the United States compared to its adversaries.

May was the first hire in ONA history (going back to 1973) who was recruited directly from a leading defense contractor. This is noteworthy since contractors have a great interest in ONA conducting no net assessments that could threaten the status quo. The last thing they want is for ONA to declare that the strategic situation has changed, and a given weapons system is now obsolete, especially if it is one their company makes.

With May now in charge of ONA's research agenda, the office stopped producing net assessments. Instead, it redirected its budget to fund other activities.

Under May's supervision, Stefan A. Halper completed a 655-page study titled the "Afghan End-Game," which he delivered to the Office of Net Assessment (ONA) on October 7, 2011. **ONA staff were perplexed by May's hiring of Halper.** Since 1983, Halper had been known not for his knowledge of Afghanistan or Russia but as the world's most infamous "presidential elections interference operative," a service that he had been performing since 1980. And the very year May hired him to complete his ONA report the FBI had suspended Halper's Confidential Human Source (or "CHS") status.

A CHS designation meant that the information Halper furnished his FBI and intelligence community handlers was trusted and thus subject to minimal scrutiny. But the FBI determined in 2011 that Halper exhibited a "mercurial" nature and "aggressiveness" toward FBI agents when they questioned his demands for ever greater sums of U.S. taxpayer money.

Halper described the study as "a major survey of Allied end game options in Afghanistan" that Obama's Secretary of Defense had requested. **According to Halper, that report was sourced to "a series of productive round-tables in Moscow and demonstrated the opportunities for further dialogue as during V.I. Trubnikov's visit in May 2011 to the Cambridge Intelligence Seminar."**

This reference introduced a new player to the Russiagate narrative.

General V.I. Trubnikov's first job after joining the KGB was undercover in India. He ran Russian Foreign Intelligence (SVR) from 2000-2004. After that he was Deputy Foreign Minister and then Russian Ambassador to India. ONA staff knew that "former" senior Russian intelligence officers are required to serve Moscow to their last dying breath. If they refuse, they may fall prey to what Russian intelligence benignly call "assistance measures." This includes targeted assassinations, such as their trademark "forced suicides," and fall under the slightly opaque term *mokryye dela*, or "wet affairs."

In 2002, Putin made sure legislation titled "On Countering Extreme Activity" was signed into Russia's federal law. That authority, updated in 2006 after a trial run of the earlier law, authorizes him to assassinate his enemies, such as through subjecting them to horrific poisoning using polonium-210.

Only the most loyal, trusted, and useful Russian spies get Russian travel visas. **Trubnikov was a veritable globe trotter, coming and going from Russia to the West with ease.** And Halper often [boasted](#) of how “really plugged in” to Moscow Trubnikov was. Halper, perhaps showing his age, would [refer](#) to Trubnikov in 2016 as “a senior KGB general.”

Halper hosted General Trubnikov again at his Cambridge University seminar mid-2012 to speak on his time as head of Russian Foreign Intelligence (SVR) on “the likely course of Russia’s relations with Britain and the U.S.” Trubnikov’s visit to Cambridge resulted in Halper co-authoring a pro-Russia report for ONA titled *“Dynamics of Russian and European engagement in the next 10 to 20 years.”*

The Halper-Trubnikov report for ONA determined the U.S. should not only stop viewing Moscow as an enemy but come to see Putin’s Russia as a potential ally. That is because, as they concluded in their U.S. taxpayer-funded report, Washington and Moscow had a “joint interest in responding to the challenge posed by China’s increasing economic, strategic and military power. This situation opens up new opportunities for strategic co-operation between the two countries.” That report, sourced to Russian intelligence, downplayed the Russia threat, endorsed a U.S.-Russia partnership against China, and re-enforced then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s support for “a strong Russia” as part of her “Russia reset”.

It was also classic Russian disinformation. **Halper’s FBI file [questions](#) his fundamental loyalty to the United States.** His FBI file flagged Halper’s “questionable allegiances,” and that he was [proud](#) of having “a lot of friends in Russia,” including having “developed a friendship” with senior Russian spy and ONA consultant General Trubnikov.

The Halper-Trubnikov report commissioned by ONA informed Pentagon leadership that *“forces within the Russian elite, mainly from an intelligence background and including senior figures such as Evgeny Savostyanov [former head of Moscow Region KGB-FSB and] Vyacheslav Trubnikov,”* seek “closer relations with the United States.... These forces, separate from political power but nationalist and patriotic, think that it would be possible to convince Putin of such a course. Savostyanov and Trubnikov both engaged in frank and open discussions while visiting Cambridge in 2012.”

The Steele Dossier: What is Past is Prologue

For decades ONA was headed by Andy Marshall, a man who became legendary in the field. **Marshall not only pioneered the discipline of “net assessment” but also used a “future history” approach where a set of outcomes is assumed and then worked backward analytically to determine what strategic decisions need to be made now to achieve the desired outcome.**

This leads implicitly to a recommendation for the best strategy to pursue. It is the opposite of traditional game theory which begins in the present and works outwards along the branches of a decision tree based on choices made and a probability distribution around the likely outcomes, then moving on to assess the decision needed after that outcome is determined.

In late 2014 **President Obama removed Marshall and replaced him with James H. Baker.** Like May, the hiring of Baker was a bit of a puzzle. He did not have much experience in strategic assessment. On the other hand, he would show himself to be politically reliable.

In a letter to Senator Charles Grassley dated July 1, 2020, Director Baker [suggested](#) that he had hired Halper for a secret purpose related to Russian intelligence. Grassley had [asked](#) Baker, in a January 22, 2020 letter, specifically about what Baker knew of Halper's relationship with Trubnikov, what Halper had paid Trubnikov, and whether Baker could have been used by Trubnikov to channel "biased and unreliable information" from Putin's Russia straight into the information bloodstream of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. **Halper had listed Trubnikov as a "consultant" for his ONA contracts.** Pressed by Grassley, Baker [told](#) the U.S. Senator that he was aware of Halper's employing Trubnikov as a source for his ONA contracts.

Spycraft is called "spycraft" because it applies, and improves upon, time-tested tactics and techniques. The [insertion](#) by Russia of disinformation into one lower profile government document is done to test the perviousness of the U.S. national security bureaucracy to Russian kompromat (compromising material) .

It is also to normalize that kompromat, and its source. **In June 2019, the DoD Office of Inspector General [conducted](#) an investigation of Halper's contracts for ONA, and [found](#) Halper had conducted massive fraud.** Even after being alerted to Halper's fraud by Senator Grassley, Baker [assured](#) the Senator from Iowa that he had personally "determined" that Halper had "performed satisfactorily" for ONA and that his fraudulent work product was "high quality." Admitting otherwise would have required Baker to come to grips with the fact that under his and Andrew D. May's watch, Russian intelligence had been granted a golden opportunity to inject Russian disinformation into official DoD documents for five years. For this work, **thanks to May and Baker, Halper received over \$1 million from U.S. taxpayers.**

In addition to receiving payment from Halper and a disinformation channel straight into the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Trubnikov benefitted in other ways as well. **By normalizing Trubnikov as a source for DoD documents, May had made him into a star back home in Russia.** Thanks to Trubnikov, Moscow [knew](#) no later than July 2016 that Hillary Clinton was behind the Trump-Russia collusion story.

By then, Halper and Trubnikov had worked together for half a decade. This ensured Trubnikov not just an insider's view of the Pentagon's long-term strategy (via ONA), but of the development of the Hillary Clinton-generated and Halper-propagated Trump-Russia collusion story.

In a victory lap on June 28, 2016, Trubnikov crowed in an interview on National Public Radio:

"Today, to get any kind of secret paper, with the top-secret info, it's nothing," Trubnikov [boasted](#) on how he had manipulated ONA leadership.

"It is essential to penetrate into the brains of those who are leading the country."

Trubnikov had certainly been astonishingly successful at injecting Russian disinformation into Pentagon reports. **The timing of the Trubnikov NPR interview was perfect; it came just three days before the FBI launched project Crossfire Hurricane to investigate the Trump campaign.**

Halper's half decade-long partnership with Trubnikov collaborating on ONA contracts provided political cover to Clinton and the DNC in the development of the Dossier. Since Trubnikov had been normalized, thanks to Andrew D. May from 2010-2016 as a "source" of Russian disinformation into the Pentagon, using him as a source for the Steele Dossier came naturally.

In December 2019 this came into greater focus thanks to the U.S. Department of Justice Inspector General [declassifying](#) a footnote. **Steele's "election reporting" work product, sourced to ONA consultants Halper and Trubnikov, [appeared to be](#) "part of a Russian disinformation campaign to denigrate U.S. foreign relations."**

[According](#) to a second footnote in the DoJ report: The source of that disinformation came from "RIS 'infiltrat[ing] a source into the network' of a [REDACTED] who compiled a dossier of information on Trump's activities." RIS is an acronym for Russian Intelligence Services. **Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Russia Kathleen Kavalec [recorded](#) that Steele had told her the Dossier's information had come from none other than General V.I. Trubnikov.**

According to the IG report, DoJ had learned about Trubnikov's role by July 30, 2016. On that day Christopher Steele met with DoJ lawyer Bruce Ohr in downtown Washington D.C. at the Mayflower Hotel. **According to Ohr's [sworn testimony](#) before Congress, Steele told Ohr that "a former head of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, the SVR, had stated...that they had Donald Trump over a barrel."** More ominously, but hardly surprising, Steele [deemed](#) his source a "former top level intelligence officer still active in the Kremlin."

At the time, there were only two living former heads of Russian intelligence: Sergey Lebedev, and Vyacheslav I. Trubnikov. Steele narrowed that pool further by describing his source as a former Russian Foreign Ministry official. Public records [show](#) that Trubnikov had been a high-level official in the Russian Foreign Ministry whereas Lebedev [was not](#).

The very next day two key events occurred at the J. Edgar Hoover building in downtown Washington D.C. **Ohr's colleagues at the FBI launched, without predicate, operation Crossfire Hurricane, and Comey's FBI hired Halper to generate dirt on Michael T. Flynn.**

By September 2016, Halper would report back to his FBI handlers that he had "some great information coming out." Those words were [recorded](#) by the FBI in a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act-authorized intercept in September 2016. The same month Halper uttered those words, he enjoyed a big payday courtesy of the U.S. taxpayer from ONA's Baker and to the tune of \$282,292 for "studies" sourced to Halper and Trubnikov.

Despite beginning its rollback of the Russiagate narrative, **the Washington Post has yet to acknowledge the role played by Trubnikov in the Steele Dossier affair.** This despite Trubnikov being referenced twice in the Dossier. Stefan Halper's 2015 study for ONA transformed General Trubnikov into two people. **Halper listed his collaborator on that study as "V.I. Trubnikov," the infamous former head of Russia Foreign Intelligence (SVR). Halper then lists in that same report another collaborator, V.S. Trubnikov, and calls him the "Former Russian Deputy Foreign Minister and Russian Ambassador to India."** Everyone in ONA knew this was a fiction because V.I. Trubnikov held ALL THREE positions. There is no separate V.S. Trubnikov who held the position of Deputy Foreign Minister and Russian Ambassador to India.

Halper created the two Trubnikovs in his report for ONA to provide verisimilitude for the two Trubnikovs in the Steele Dossier, which [listed](#) Source A as a “senior Russian Foreign Ministry figure” and Source B as a “former top level intelligence officer still active in the Kremlin”. Source A is used to verify Source B. Both are the same person. A fact like that is easily checkable by the media. But if it were checked, the Dossier which justified launching Crossfire Hurricane, would be seen as potential Russian spy craft. It was without apparent irony that **FBI Director James Comey would testify that he felt that part of his job was to prevent Trump from causing “corrosive damage to the institutions of justice.”**

Official Silence About the Dossier

On July 28, 2016, three days before the launch of Crossfire Hurricane and just a few months before the November 2016 presidential election, then CIA Director John Brennan briefed President Obama that Moscow knew that Clinton had generated the Trump-Russia collusion allegation. According to Brennan’s [hand-written notes from that meeting](#): “CITE alleged approved by Hillary Clinton a proposal from one of her foreign policy advisers to vilify Donald Trump by stirring up a scandal claiming interference by the Russian security service.”

A Director of National Intelligence (DNI) investigation later [reported](#):

“In late July 2016, U.S. intelligence agencies obtained insight into Russian intelligence analysis alleging that U.S. Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton had approved a campaign plan to stir up a scandal against U.S. Presidential candidate Donald Trump by tying him to Putin and the Russians’ hacking of the Democratic National Committee.”

In August 2016, Obama’s CIA Director John Brennan [briefed](#) the contents of the Steele Dossier to the “Gang of Eight,” the highest-ranking Members of the Senate and House intelligence committees. **Both Obama and Brennan knew by then that not only was Hillary Clinton the [source](#) of the Steele Dossier, and that its purpose was to “stir up a scandal against...Trump by tying him to Putin,” but that Moscow was aware of Clinton’s scheme.**

In an apparent attempt to give both Obama and himself plausible deniability, Brennan put on a [big show](#) to legitimize his wares. Brennan sent it to the White House via courier from CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia. He marked it “eyes only” and deemed it too sensitive even for inclusion in the CIA’s “Presidential Daily Briefing.” Once Obama and a few aides reviewed the materials, Brennan insisted that it be returned to him personally, just as it had come. Again, by then **both men had known since July 2016 that Clinton was behind the Trump-Russia conspiracy theory, and that the Russians knew it.**

Following Brennan’s briefing of the Dossier’s contents to the Gang of Eight, then Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) [demanded](#) that FBI director Comey launch a “full examination” of Putin’s “influence” on team Trump.” Again, Reid’s accusation was made without any sense of irony. **Reid doubtless knew as the Gang of Eight knew, that paid Clinton campaign surrogates were knowingly channeling Russian disinformation into the U.S. presidential election process for the purpose of swaying American voters.**

On September 7, 2016, U.S. intelligence officials [issued](#) an investigative referral to Comey and Strzok regarding Clinton's role in [targeting](#) Trump as a Russian agent "as a means of distracting the public from her use of a private mail server." The referral from the intelligence officers was never acted upon. No public reference to the referral was made.

On October 30, 2016 with just a few days before the presidential election, Reid [wrote](#) to Comey what the FBI Director knew by then was absurd:

"It has become clear that you possess explosive information about close ties and coordination between Donald Trump, his top advisors and the Russian government."

The letter was leaked of course to create the right news story.

A serious problem developed for the intelligence community once Trump won the election. He had the wherewithal to investigate everything described above. They ultimately benefitted from Trump's naïveté, lack of understanding Washington and incompetence. But they wanted to take no chances.

CIA Director Brennan quickly organized Obama's January 2017 Intelligence Community Assessment (ICA). It [included](#) the contents of the Steele Dossier as Annex A. Comey had "[insisted](#)" that Steele's materials be included in the body of the ICA itself, but that was abandoned as imprudent. Although every relevant player knew by then that the Clinton campaign was behind the Trump-Russia conspiracy theory no mention of that fact accompanied the Annex.

The ICA was now an official government work product. If Brennan, Comey, Clapper or Obama were ever asked about what they knew and when they knew it, they could point to the ICA and say that this was the assessment blessed by U.S. intelligence.

Two did exactly that. James Clapper, Director of National Intelligence said the ICA corroborated the Dossier. He [stated](#) that "some of what was in the dossier was actually corroborated – but separately – in our Intelligence Community Assessment." Which content that was is unclear. FBI Director Comey did the same. **The DoJ Inspector General would report that Comey [committed](#) two felonies, first in leaking information to the press about an ongoing investigation and then lying about it under oath.** No action was taken against either man.

On its face the ICA was a political document, not an intelligence assessment. It was designed to sway public opinion and was [released](#) to the public under the title "Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections". This was unprecedented. ICAs were typically classified as Top Secret or above. No ICA, much less one dealing with Russian cyber-sources and methods has been released to the public. **The result was the media focused on Trump-Russia collusion instead of asking questions about Hillary Clinton's role in generating that narrative and the Dossier.**

Still Trubnikov's working relationship with Halper was a double-edged sword for Clinton and Obama. While they were "playing" Moscow for kompromat on candidate Trump, Moscow was also playing them. **Since Obama and his spy chiefs had known since July 2016 that Russian intelligence had known about Hillary Clinton's role in generating the Trump-Russia collusion story, they were all potentially subject to Russian blackmail.**

Clinton herself was the most vulnerable. Had she won the presidency, Putin – a trained KGB operative – would follow “standard procedure” and dispatch his ambassador to tell her one-on-one during a walk around Camp David or on the White House grounds that Russian intelligence knew everything. If Hillary continued to conceal her role in generating the Trump-Russia collusion story, Putin would then start making demands and threaten to expose her scheme if she failed to cooperate.

The ICA did not mention this possibility. But [one line](#) that stood out to intelligence analysts also doubtless caught the attention of Moscow.

“Putin and the Russian government aspired to help President-elect Trump’s election chances when possible by discrediting Secretary Clinton...We assess Moscow will apply lessons learned from its Putin-ordered campaign aimed at the U.S. election to future influence efforts worldwide.”

A claim to know what Putin “aspired” to do was hubris at best and more likely absurd. Putin had established a win-win thanks to Trubnikov’s efforts. If Trump won, the Russiagate conspiracy would weaken his Presidency. **If Clinton won she was highly compromised. That would be an easy conclusion for an experienced intelligence analyst. Someone like Michael T. Flynn.**

The Need to Get Mike Flynn

Soon after 9/11, Mike Flynn was sent to the Middle East. From 2002 to 2010 he was Commander of the 111th Military Intelligence Brigade, Director of Intelligence for Joint Special Operations Command, U.S. Central Command, U.S. Joint Staff, and the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Flynn and General Stanley A. McCrystal were instrumental in developing the U.S. military’s counterinsurgency doctrine.

To gather useful intelligence, U.S. military personnel first had to gain the trust of key Iraqi and Afghan communities. This was done by showing America had “skin in the game.” **U.S. forces decamped from the safety of bases and armored vehicles and risked their lives to live amongst and protect the local population for long periods of time.** While this resulted in superior battlefield intelligence, as Flynn laid out in his 2010 report entitled, “Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan,” bureaucratic politics then interfered with the effective use of that information.

The process Flynn inherited required that battlefield intelligence be sent to Washington for analysis. But by the time that analysis was sent back to the battlefield, it was stale and therefore often useless. Moreover, **the intelligence analysts back at CIA and DoD headquarters whose job was to interpret the significance of what they were looking at, typically lacked on-the-ground experience and thus the necessary knowledge to do so.** Instead of addressing that shortcoming, it was covered up or simply ignored so as not to set off a bureaucratic turf battle.

But Flynn’s critique of the status quo in “Fixing Intel” did just that. It was a powerful rebuke to the intelligence community (IC) and an attack on its power and turf. In July 2012 Flynn became the 18th Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). To prepare for that job, Flynn reviewed 10 years of DoD Inspector General audits of DIA’s multibillion-dollar annual expenditures. None were “clean.” That meant the agency had failed to properly account for U.S. taxpayer funds—in all of them.

Flynn then called in the DIA's head of procurement, who had been in the position for over a decade, to talk to him about it. That person told Flynn he had never met with the Director of DIA before, suggesting that Flynn's predecessors had never held the DIA's procurement department to account for its demonstrable mismanagement. Flynn reassigned him to a position at the National Intelligence University where he could do less harm.

He made his actions public in a speech on September 12th 2013.

"Right now we are conducting DIA's first-ever full audit of the agency's capabilities, and I have launched a special Task Force that is laser-focused on examining and analyzing DIA's reliance on contracting to make sure we are spending our money as wisely as possible. I take the mandate to cut waste very seriously, and I also want to make sure we are putting our money into the right places where our attention will have to be focused on the various crossroads, and ultimately, strategic turns that we will have to negotiate in the future."

Flynn's whistleblowing was the equivalent of a declaration of war against a bureaucratic empire that had not been audited since 1975, following the Nixon Administration's Watergate scandal. **That speech, while [searchable](#) on the DIA website is now inaccessible.**

After becoming Deputy Secretary of Defense in 2014, Robert O. Work made his long-time business partner, Michael Vickers, Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence. A career CIA operative, Vickers' role in sourcing the Afghan Mujahideen had been embellished in a [book](#) entitled "Charlie Wilson's War" that later got turned into a [movie](#) starring Tom Hanks.

Vickers's obsession with burnishing his image with Hollywood later resulted in the DoD Inspector General [recommending](#) Vickers be criminally referred to the Department of Justice for "a hemorrhage of leaks" of classified information to the producers of the film Zero Dark Thirty.

This was inconvenient for the ambitious Vickers, who openly pined to become Director of National Intelligence in a prospective Clinton Administration. **Vickers hated Flynn, whose efforts to improve the processing of battlefield intelligence in theater while effectively cutting out Washington was a threat to what had become his bureaucratic turf as well as to his well burnished reputation.**

When his friend DNI Clapper fired Flynn from the DIA, Vickers made sure he was in the room to watch Flynn's fall in triumph. As in the case of the others who had their relevant Inspectors General refer them for criminal action, the Justice Department did [nothing](#).

Within weeks of Trump's inauguration and Flynn's installation as his national security adviser, Flynn would have easily accumulated the evidence on what Obama, Brennan and Comey had known by July 2016: It was Hillary Clinton herself who had cooked up the Trump-Russia conspiracy theory and Moscow knew all about it. Their response was to "flip accuse" and be the first mover. Phase one of the plan to neutralize Flynn began as soon as Trump won.

In Obama's first meeting with Trump on November 10th, two days after the 2016 presidential election, he [warned](#) his successor not to make Flynn his National Security Advisor. Trump later told staff that he found it odd that this passing of the torch meeting got into personnel matters, and he rejected Obama's advice.

One of the protections that government officials possess is the ability to block evidence from entering the public domain by turning the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) on its head. Proceedings to clear materials can drag on almost indefinitely and when material is released it can be redacted almost at will. In the interim they can designate officials who are trying to make the materials public as “insider threats” to national security. This capacity grew after November 2012 when President Obama [launched](#) his National Insider Threat Policy to go after “insiders who misuse their access and endanger our national security.” **Sounds noble, but it allowed the folks at the top to suspend the security clearances of anyone posing a threat thus not only getting them fired but making them unemployable in their field.**

They used this on Flynn. On January 4, 2017, FBI investigators reported what Comey had known for some time. After scouring all FBI files for derogatory information on Flynn, none was found. The investigators recommended that the investigation of Flynn be shut down. But it wasn't. Comey, in a departure from normal practice, [directed](#) his subordinates for unspecified reasons to keep it open. “7th Floor involved,” Peter Strzok texted his FBI lover Lisa Page. Strzok was the Chief of the Counterespionage Section and led the FBI's investigation into Hillary Clinton's use of a personal email server. **He also famously had texted Page that they needed to start an [investigation](#) of Trump as an “insurance policy” and launched Crossfire Hurricane.** With “the 7th Floor involved” he ordered that the Flynn investigation continue.

The following day Comey joined Obama, Biden, Brennan, Clapper, Yates, Rice and other members of the NSC staff in the Oval Office. When the meeting ended, Obama and Vice President Biden asked Comey and Yates to “stay behind.” The [conversation](#) turned to ways to get rid of Flynn. As Sally Yates testified to Congress later, she was surprised to learn during that January 5th Oval Office meeting that Obama knew all about a routine phone call Flynn had had with Russian Ambassador Kislyak. Such things were “operational”—very down in the weeds for a President to know about independently. Rice [memorialized](#) this meeting in a memo to herself written on her very last day in office. Something had to be said given that the meeting had taken place.

It appears then-Vice President Biden's [contribution](#) to the meeting was to get Flynn fired by charging him with a Logan Act violation. That obscure law from 1799 deems it illegal for civilians to interfere in U.S. foreign relations. Most legal scholars regarded the law as something between superannuated and unconstitutional. What is more, never in its 200+ year history had the law even been used to prosecute any U.S. citizen. Using it on the incoming U.S. National Security Advisor much less for his entirely proper and anodyne discussion with the Russian Ambassador, would not pass the laugh test. But the evidence of Biden's statement reinforces that the purpose of the January 5th meeting at the White House was to get Flynn fired.

In September 2017, Susan Rice [testified](#) before Congress that she had seen no evidence of Trump-Russia collusion. Nevertheless, about forty [different](#) senior officials in the Obama Administration would make multiple unmasking requests of Flynn's identity from classified intercepts. Unmasking had been a very rare action until then. That massive and widespread focus on one person only happens when the order comes straight from the someone at or near the top.

One of the unmasking requests was by James Clapper. On January 7, 2017, Clapper [unmasked](#) Flynn's NSA-intercepted call with Kislyak a third time. Three days later, on January 10th, Clapper ordered what he called the "kill shot" against Flynn. Despite several [reports](#), including by Flynn's attorney, that ONA's James H. Baker placed a disinformation sniper bullet between Flynn's eyes, Baker was [never](#) investigated.

But it was Baker's old "friend" David Ignatius of the *Washington Post* who [took](#) the shot. Halper, Baker and Ignatius were old friends and shared a similar world view, especially in support of Obama's Iran deal. **The Ignatius [article](#) mentioned Biden's suggestion that Flynn may have violated the 1799 Logan Act in his talk with Kislyak.**

The *Washington Examiner* later [suggested](#) that Ignatius was illegally tipped off about this highly classified information by Baker at the behest of his co-conspirator, Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work, who had hosted a meeting during which the IC briefed him on the matter.

Brennan Tries to Establish That Flynn Was on a Treasonous Path

Even before the meeting in the Oval, CIA Director Brennan had already set up a parallel track to get Flynn using none other than Stefan Halper, the man who had brought Trubnikov into the Dossier research. The FBI received a memo sourced to Halper [about](#) an alleged affair between Flynn and a Cambridge University academic named Svetlana Lokhova.

In Halper's telling, the tryst had taken place almost three years earlier. But, now **in early January 2017, it was of such pressing interest to Comey that, according to a December 2019 Department of Justice report, the FBI [offered](#) to pay "significantly" for that report.**

The FBI's interest in this memo was particularly strange because, in April 2016, Flynn had [passed](#) a rigorous background check that renewed his Top Secret/SCI security clearance. If he had had an affair with a foreigner, especially someone born in Russia specializing in that country's intelligence services, Flynn would not have passed that background check.

What Brennan needed from Halper was three data points to reveal that Flynn had ventured on a "[treasonous path](#)." Halper knew that for his FBI handlers, the number three was sufficient to generate a pattern. The tryst was going to be one of the three.

For the first data point, Halper reached back nearly four years to an [official trip](#) that DIA Director Flynn had taken to Moscow in July 2013. This was no voluntary junket. He was ordered by Obama to Moscow as part of an investigation of foreign involvement in the Boston Marathon bombing. Flynn met with Igor Sergun, chief of Russian military intelligence (GRU). Sergun had served in Chechnya and was considered one of the world's leading experts on Islamist warfare.

The counterinsurgency tactics Flynn had used to great success in Afghanistan resembled Sergun's in a critical way: Both relied on tribal elders to control the younger and more violent generation and cooperate with an outside power to keep the peace.

Nothing about the Obama-directed trip was improper and Flynn's TS/SCI security clearance was renewed several times thereafter without a hitch. Nevertheless, in 2016, Halper submitted a new report on Flynn to the FBI alleging that Flynn had suspicious links to the GRU and that Moscow pegged him as a "very influential" "rising star" worthy of cultivation.

After leaving the U.S. Government, on December 10, 2015, **Flynn had given a paid speech in Moscow and been a guest of the Russian government-owned media outlet "Russia Today."** His Russian hosts seated Putin next to him at dinner. Because the DIA was using that trip for a purpose that remains nonpublic, Flynn was given a DIA defensive or protective pre-briefing, and had been de-briefed by DIA upon his return.

At his de-brief he passed on to his DIA handlers Russian information via a computer file. Like his trip to Moscow to investigate the Boston Marathon bombing, in April 2016 – less than a year after Flynn's 2015 trip to Moscow – he sailed through the renewal of his TS/SCI security clearance. **Halper used that trip for his second data point to support Brennan's "treasonous path" narrative about Flynn.**

For the third "treasonous" data point Halper reached back in time to a sumptuous candlelit dinner in February 2014 at Cambridge University hosted by Christopher Andrew and Sir Richard Dearlove, the former head of MI6 and the then Master of Pembroke College. Dearlove pulled out all the stops to butter up the guest of honor, then DIA Director Flynn.

The college broke out its best crystal, silver and linens, and menus on thick cotton-infused paper with the Pembroke coat-of-arms were printed and edged in gold. The dinner was held in the college's most prestigious and ancient oak-paneled dining room. To woo DIA funding, Halper invited personnel stationed at RAF airbase Molesworth, to earn Cambridge University degrees under Halper's direction. **The purpose of the dinner was to convince Flynn to use U.S. taxpayer funds to bankroll the Cambridge Intelligence Seminar (CIS), just as Russian oligarchs were then doing.**

No DIA Director goes anywhere without security pre-planning, especially in a country known as a hotbed for Russian espionage. Long-time DIA officer Dan O'Brien and an armed security officer accompanied Flynn to the dinner.

At an appointed hour of the evening, Flynn was spirited off with his official detail to a guarded location for the night. Like all attendees at the dinner, the young, attractive blonde scholar Svetlana Lokhova, the only female there, had been pre-vetted by DIA months before. Born in Russia, Lokhova had emigrated to Britain to attend university. She earned undergraduate and graduate degrees at Cambridge and distinguished herself as a researcher and critically acclaimed author of early Soviet espionage. By the time of the dinner, she was a British citizen. Lokhova's mentor was Halper's CIS co-founder, Christopher Andrew.

Halper had skipped the dinner in Pembroke College, so lacked first-hand knowledge of any meeting between Flynn and Lokhova. **To establish the bogus "contact" paper trail that his FBI handlers may ask him for, Halper coaxed Christopher Andrew into luring his former student back to Cambridge and into a trap. Andrew readily complied.**

In addition to leveraging their inherent coercive power over Lokhova, these two men dangled the possibility that Andrew would co-author a book with his long-time protégé, and Halper would promote it in the United States.

The FBI had prepared Halper for the meeting, giving him a "wire." This apparently was what FBI lawyer Lisa Page meant when she [texted](#) her FBI lover Strzok in December 2015: "You get all our oconus lures approved?" "Oconus" stands for "outside the continental United States."

A "lure" is the counterintelligence term for a double agent operation. By "approved," she meant by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court. **All Halper needed to do was make "contact" with Lokhova, then turn the conversation to whether she slept with Flynn.**

When Andrew called Lokhova on January 12, 2016 to invite her to dinner at Halper's home the following month, she declined. On hearing her mentor's voice, a man she had known for 20 years, Lokhova smelled a rat. He aggressively insisting she attend. Recall that Lokhova was quite familiar with spy craft.

The dinner never happened and Halper's trip to England to ambush Lokhova—paid for by U.S. taxpayers thanks to Baker, May, and the ONA budget—was all for naught. Nevertheless, nine months later, Steele passed to FBI official Strzok information on the fake Flynn-Lokhova affair in October 2016, one month before the presidential election.

Six days after Flynn resigned as National Security Advisor, Christopher Andrew authored an article titled "Impulsive General Misha shoots himself in the foot" that [ran](#) in the U.K.'s *Sunday Times* on February 19, 2017.

Just as Comey, Brennan and Clapper had ensured the Steele Dossier would be normalized by becoming a part of Obama's 2017 Intelligence Community Assessment, Andrew launched the narrative, to be repeated and embellished in the press for years, that Lokhova was a Russian spy who had seduced Flynn for Putin. **Andrew's revenge was not just on Flynn, but on Lokhova, who by refusing to come to dinner had blown up his caper.**

Before the publication of Andrew's article, Lokhova's sterling credentials and publications all but assured her a comfortable professoriate at a university and a quiet life to raise a family. After Andrew's *Sunday Times* story she became unemployable, was stalked, and received death threats.

"He needed an innocuous social event to place Flynn in a room with a woman who was ethnically Russian. I was unlucky he picked me," [recounted](#) Lokhova.

Brennan's testimony before the U.S. Congress was scheduled to fall on the heels of Andrew's *Sunday Times* article, but that got pushed back. It didn't matter. On May 23, 2017 he [testified](#) before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

"Often, individuals who go along a treasonous path do not even realize they're along that path until it gets to be a bit too late...Russian agencies routinely seek to gather compromising information, or 'kompromat,' to coerce treason from U.S. officials who do not even realize they are on that path until it gets too late."

To make sure everyone knew precisely whom Brennan was talking about, Ignatius's *Post* quickly clarified that he meant Flynn.

The \$40 million taxpayer-funded Mueller Investigation had the effect of buying time for the caper. It allowed an endless stream of leaks to friendly reporters that kept any potential threat at bay.

After nearly three years of leaving no stone unturned on the Trump campaign, Mueller [reported](#) that his team "did not identify evidence ... of coordination between the [Trump] Campaign and the Russian government." "Russian government officials and prominent Russian businessmen," Mueller reported, "began trying to make inroads into the new administration" after the 2016 election. **Contrary to the Russiagate narrative, Russian officials "appeared not to have preexisting contacts and struggled to connect with senior officials around the President-Elect."**

None of that helped Flynn or Lokhova.

A Russian Perspective

In the early years of the Cold War, George Kennan had [observed](#) that for Moscow, “it is necessary that the internal harmony of our society be disrupted, our traditional way of life be destroyed, [and] the international authority of our state to be broken.”

In the Cold War, as [described](#) in 2013 by Russian Chief of the General Staff, General Valery Gerasimov, “deep-cover illegals” were used for channeling disinformation to where it could do the most harm. Moscow’s doctrine of “indirect action” sought to plunge the U.S. into “a vortex of chaos, humanitarian catastrophe, or even civil war.”

Four years later, Moscow reiterated publicly their strategy to subvert America from within, for anyone in the U.S. who cared to listen. “By inserting disinformation in publications, advocating extremist ideas, inciting racist and xenophobic flash mobs,” [said](#) Russian General Igor Dylevsky on Russia’s cyberwarfare strategy, “it is possible to ‘heat up’ the situation in any country, all the way up to the point of a social unrest.”

Dylevsky concluded his address, to the Sixth Moscow Conference on International Security, by announcing that Russia’s information weaponry could “destabilize any society and dismantle any government.”

To toast his stunning victory of dividing and conquering American democracy from within, the man Putin called “the Michelangelo of spy craft” ordered champagne. An artist by temperament, Trubnikov chose to [regale](#) his U.S. National Public Radio interviewer with his own impersonation of Captain Renault in *Casablanca*. As the stage set for his Grand Finale in service to the Kremlin, Trubnikov chose Moscow’s sumptuous Metropole Hotel during the month of June, 2017.

“TRUBNIKOV: To be frank, I never expected that American society would be so deeply split. I never expected this. I considered this society more solid.

NPR: You mentioned a split in American society and how surprising you find it. The fear in the United States is that Russia has also identified these divisions and is working to worsen them, to spread confusion, to make American democracy look bad. Is that true, do you think?

TRUBNIKOV: What for? In what sense Russia—what Russia gets from [a] split American society?

NPR: If you weaken your adversary, that can work to your advantage.

TRUBNIKOV: It is absolutely incorrect. It reminds me of very old anecdote about two neighbors. One neighbor has two cows and his neighbor has only one cow. So the neighbor who has one cow does not think in terms to have another one, but that one cow of neighbor would die. This is perverted logic which exists, unfortunately. But be absolutely sure today’s Russia, at least the bulk of politicians here, do not think in such terms.

NPR: You don’t believe that a weakened America is to Russia’s advantage?

TRUBNIKOV: To have a weak partner does not mean that you become stronger.

NPR: Former Russian spymaster Vyacheslav Trubnikov. Although ask any CIA guy, they'll tell you there's no former KGB."

Russiagate and the Afghanistan Debacle

The Office of Net Assessment which May and Baker took over in the Obama years was not just any office. "Net assessments" are comparative analyses of the U.S. long-term strategic competition between America and her adversaries.

More importantly, net assessments are the precursors to strategies i.e., without a net assessment one has no context in which to craft and execute long-term military strategy. **This mission is so critical that ONA is required by statute to produce at least one Top Secret net assessment a year.**

In 2018, asked under oath if he had completed any net assessments in the nearly four years he had by then led ONA, Baker responded "No." Baker justified his lack of producing net assessments by arguing that the U.S. did not need a grand strategy to compete against America's adversaries:

"My present duties are to be diagnostic, not prescriptive, in service to the Secretary. As a strategist, however, I feel compelled to offer one proposal. It is possible that muddling through, defending present commitments, holding to the status quo...that this maintenance mindset may be sufficient."

In early 2019, Senator Grassley [complained](#) that an investigation he ordered into ONA's use of Stephan Halper and General Trubnikov was just "getting kicked around the OIG bureaucracy instead of being subjected to aggressive, hard hitting oversight." He thought this because no one in the DoD Office of the Inspector General had even bothered to examine ONA's contracts with Halper, and without looking at them concluded that there was no issue. "How did OIG make judgements about contracts without ever looking at them?" Grassley [asked](#) Obama appointee and "Acting" DoD IG Glenn Fine, on January 16, 2019.

In 2020, Senator Grassley turned his attention to Baker himself. He asked Baker why he had violated ONA's statutory duty by producing no net assessments. **Instead of fessing up to his dereliction of duty and correcting the problem, Baker got Trump's Deputy Secretary of Defense David Norquist to [sign](#) a new directive, on April 14, 2020, [removing](#) the word "shall" from ONA's requirement to produce net assessments.**

Grassley was so upset that he went onto the Senate floor on July 2, 2020, and in a dramatic 7-1/2 minute speech [asked](#) "what planet does the Office of Net Assessment live on?" Despite this incredible call-out the directive removing ONA's requirement to perform net assessments [stands](#) to this day. But Baker was just getting started in bamboozling the U.S. Senate.

Despite nearly half a decade of news articles – starting in August 2016 – on Baker's refusal to conduct net assessments, **Baker remains on the job at ONA** -- an office created in the wake of Vietnam to make sure the U.S. never entered another conflict without a comprehensive strategy -as the Pentagon's highest level strategist. This meant America was flying blind strategically, in both our wars (Afghanistan and Iraq) and our strategic competitions (Russia, China, Iran). "Muddling through" as Baker calls it approvingly.

America's ignominious withdrawal from Afghanistan, replete with desperate Afghans hanging and falling from the wheel wells of C-17 transport planes, illustrates the real-world consequences of the repurposing of ONA. At the Pentagon, following the fall of Kabul, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin [said](#) he doesn't have enough forces to help Americans or qualified Afghans get to the airport for flights to safety. "I don't have the capability to go out and extend operations currently into Kabul," Austin [said](#) in his first public comments since the fall of the capital on August 15. "We don't have the capability to go out and collect up large numbers of people."

Without net assessments, critical information assessing the long-term strategic competition between the U.S. and the Ghani administration on one side, and the Taliban on the other, was not generated, resulting unsurprisingly in President Biden's [admission](#):

"But I always promised the American people that I will be straight with you. The truth is: This did unfold more quickly than we had anticipated."

This is what happens when you intentionally fly blind.