

Covington - Burling and Perkins - Coie law firms manipulated government to rig elections and public policy

By [Paul Sperry, RealClearInvestigations](#)

Top officials with the Hillary Clinton campaign re-engaged with the opposition researchers behind the Steele dossier just three weeks after Donald Trump's inauguration, newly declassified congressional witness transcripts reveal, indicating her campaign's participation in an ongoing and well-funded effort to undermine the president by casting him as a tool of the Kremlin.



Secretary of State Hillary Clinton with then-Deputy Chief of Staff Jake Sullivan in 2009. Shortly after Donald Trump's inauguration, Sullivan accompanied John Podesta to a meeting with Fusion GPS principals to start a new anti-Trump venture.

AP Photo/Ng Han Guan, File

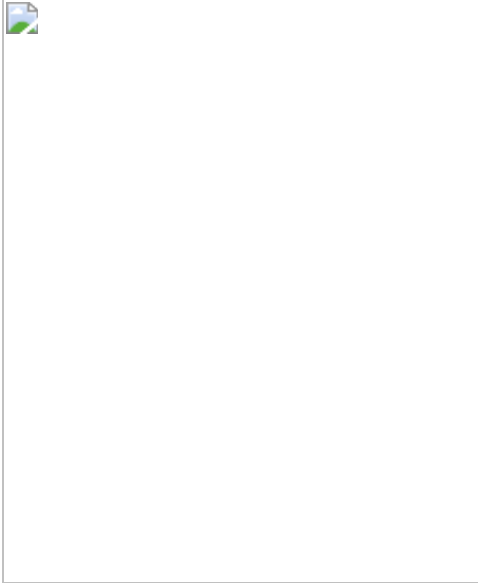
Clinton's campaign chair John Podesta testified that he and senior foreign policy adviser Jake Sullivan met on Feb. 10, 2017, with Daniel Jones, a former aide to California Sen. Dianne Feinstein, and Glenn Simpson and his partner Peter Fritsch of

Fusion GPS. The Clinton campaign had funneled money through a law firm, Perkins Coie, to pay Fusion to compile the now-discredited dossier which was a prime driver of the Trump-Russia conspiracy theories that have shadowed his administration.

“They were interested in trying to raise money to continue their efforts to investigate the Russian interference in the campaign,” Podesta told the House Intelligence Committee in December 2017. The transcripts of [his](#) and [Sullivan's](#) testimony were among the dozens of Russiagate interviews that had been withheld from the public for more than two years before being released last week.

Podesta said he agreed to help the trio open doors to big Democratic fund-raisers and sit down for press interviews and documentaries regarding any “new developments” uncovered by dossier author and former British intelligence officer Christopher Steele. Sullivan accompanied Podesta to the meeting, which he said lasted about an hour and was held in an office building in Washington.

“Was the conversation about the then-dossier?” a House panel staffer asked Sullivan, who had previously worked in the Obama administration as Vice President Joe Biden’s national security adviser.



Daniel Jones: Mimicking the Clinton campaign, his Democracy Integrity Project (TDIP) hired Fusion GPS and Christopher Steele to conduct new opposition research, paying them millions of dollars.

McCain Institute/YouTube

"I mean not specifically about the dossier," Sullivan replied. "It was sort of about the effort that they had put in to finding out ties between Trump and Russia and what their belief was based on the accumulation on that."

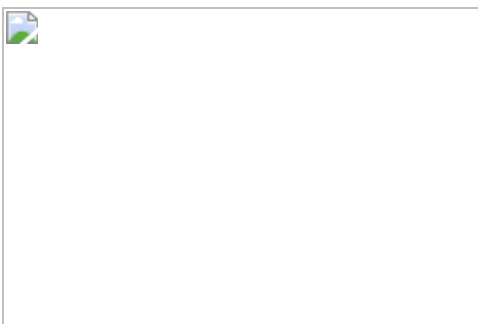
Sullivan [testified](#) behind closed doors in a separate hearing held about two weeks after Podesta's testimony.

Neither man was asked whether their efforts were known by Clinton, who has publicly suggested that [Russia has compromising information](#). Podesta's testimony did confirm [earlier reporting by RealClearInvestigations](#) that Clinton knew her campaign was paying opposition researchers to examine Trump's ties to Russia.

Just two days before the February 2017 meeting, Jones had incorporated a nonprofit called The Democracy Integrity Project (known internally as TDIP) after huddling with Simpson. The goal of their ongoing project is to “prove” the allegations in the dossier, while digging up new dirt on Trump and feeding it to media outlets, congressional investigators and the FBI to derail his presidency.

The work of such opposition research outfits has become a mainstay of Washington journalism. In their book, “Crime in Progress,” Simpson and Fritsch detail their [access to top journalists](#) at The New York Times and other influential publications.

Mimicking the Clinton campaign, TDIP hired Fusion GPS and Steele to conduct the new opposition research, paying them millions of dollars. Podesta steered his repurposed partners to donors at a time when the Clinton campaign had not yet closed its books; the campaign was still open. In 2017 alone, TDIP raised more than \$7 million with his help.



Mark Warner: TDIP's Daniel Jones has regularly communicated with investigators for the senator, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, hoping to spread more Trump-Russia theories.

(AP Photo/Julio Cortez)

The well-funded project's work has been largely shrouded in mystery. But a months-long [examination](#) by RealClearInvestigations, drawn from documents and more than a dozen interviews, found that the organization is running an elaborate media-influence operation that includes driving and shaping daily coverage of the Russia "collusion" theory, as well as pushing stories about Trump in the national media that attempt to tie the president or his associates to the Kremlin. For instance, TDIP was behind stories keeping alive the dossier's discredited claim that Trump lawyer Michael Cohen had met during the 2016 campaign with Kremlin officials in Prague, a rumor that has now been thoroughly debunked by inspector general and special counsel reports.

The group also feeds information to FBI and congressional investigators, and then tells reporters that authorities are investigating those leads. The tactic adds credibility to TDIP's pitches, luring big media outlets to bite on stories. It mirrors the strategy federal authorities themselves deployed to secure FISA warrants to spy on the Trump campaign: citing published news reports of investigative details their informants had leaked to the media to bolster their wiretap requests.

Until recently, TDIP emailed a newsletter to influential Democrats and prominent Beltway journalists under the heading "TDIP Research" – which summarized the latest "collusion" news, and offered "points of interest" to inspire fresh stories regarding Trump's alleged ties to Moscow. The bulletin is now being distributed by an affiliated nonprofit, Advance Democracy Inc., which lists the same mailing address as TDIP.



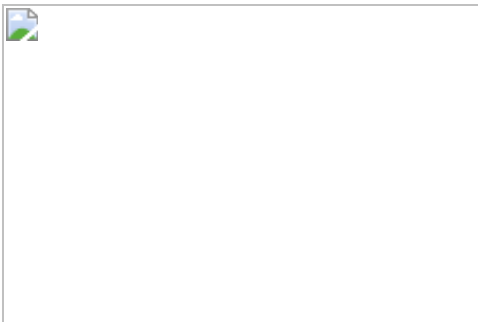
Glenn Simpson: He and his Fusion co-founder Peter Fritsch met with Clinton aides Podesta and Sullivan in February 2017 to launch a new anti-Trump venture with Daniel Jones.
Neil King/randomhousebooks.com

Recipients of the TDIP bulletins have included journalists at the New York Times and Washington Post and investigative reporters at BuzzFeed, ProPublica and McClatchy, as well as news producers at CNN and MSNBC, according to the project's email distribution list. Democratic aides on Capitol Hill have also subscribed to the newsletter.

TDIP has also pitched leads to the FBI and congressional investigators. In fact, a month after meeting with Podesta and Sullivan, Jones hired a team of computer scientists to analyze web traffic between the Alfa Bank and Trump Organization servers, and shared the findings with his former colleagues at the FBI (Jones joined the FBI as an analyst after working in a national service program launched by the Clinton administration). This was a second attempt at convincing the FBI there was a nefarious backchannel between the Russia-based bank and Trump. An attorney for the law firm that represented the Clinton campaign had already provided former FBI General

Counsel James Baker with a thumb drive outlining the tip during the 2016 campaign.

That same month, March 2017, agents nonetheless visited the offices of the Pennsylvania company that housed the Trump server. But their second investigation proved to be another dead end. The sinister communications Jones claimed were flowing between the Trump server and Alfa Bank were found to be innocuous marketing emails. In other words, spam.



Hillary Clinton with campaign manager Robby Mook, left: Within hours of her concession speech, Mook and Podesta "assembled her communications team at the Brooklyn headquarters to engineer the case that the election wasn't entirely on the up-and-up," according to the book "Shattered: Inside Hillary Clinton's Doomed Campaign."

AP Photo/Andrew Harnik

Jones has also regularly communicated with investigators for Sen. Mark Warner, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, hoping to spread more Trump-Russia conspiracy theories. Last month the Republican-led panel [affirmed](#) American intelligence officials' finding that Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election

During the 2016 campaign, Jones had worked for Democratic lobbyist Tom Daschle, who endorsed Clinton and was close to Podesta. Merging forces with Jones and Simpson fit a plan hatched by Podesta right after Clinton's surprise defeat in November 2016.

"Within 24 hours of her concession speech, [Podesta and campaign manager Robby Mook] assembled her communications team at the Brooklyn headquarters to engineer the case that the election wasn't entirely on the up-and-up," Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes report in their book, "Shattered: Inside Hillary Clinton's Doomed Campaign."

"For a couple of hours, with Shake Shack containers littering the room, they went over the script they would pitch to the press and the public," wrote Allen, who works for NBC News Digital, and Parnes, who reports for The Hill. "Already, Russian hacking was the centerpiece of the argument."

The plan, according to the book, was to push journalists to cover how "Russian hacking was the major unreported story of the campaign," and it clearly succeeded. After the election, coverage of the Russian "collusion" story was relentless, and it helped pressure investigations and hearings on Capitol Hill and even the naming of a special counsel. TDIP's dossier reboot put the influence operation into overdrive.

A month after TDIP was formed in 2017, former Clinton campaign communications director Jennifer Palmieri summed up the post-election strategy in a [Washington Post column](#) comparing "Russiagate" to Watergate and encouraging the press and other Democrats to "turn the Russia story against Trump."

“If we make plain that what Russia has done is nothing less than an attack on our republic, the public will be with us. And the more we talk about it, the more they’ll be with us,” she advised. “Polls show that voters are now concerned about the Russia story and overwhelmingly support an independent investigation.”

Though the Trump/Russia conspiracy theory was officially debunked by the Special Counsel Robert Mueller in March 2019, it has tied up Trump presidency.

Podesta’s recently released testimony provides evidence that the Clinton team and other Democrats never stopped campaigning against Trump. Hillary Clinton didn’t just pay for the Russian-sourced opposition research on candidate Trump before the election; her top aides helped bankroll continuing efforts to cast the now sitting president as a Russian agent.