

THE DNC'S CHARACTER ASSASSINATION TEAM:

Clinton campaign, DNC helped pay for work on dossier about Russia and Trump

The dossier has become a lightning rod amid the intensifying investigations into the Trump campaign's possible connections to Russia.

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By

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The Washington Post

The Hillary Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee (DNC) helped fund research that resulted in a now-famous dossier containing allegations about Donald Trump's connections to Russia and possible coordination between his campaign and the Kremlin, people familiar with the matter said.

Marc Elias, a lawyer representing the Clinton campaign and the DNC, retained Fusion GPS, a Washington, D.C., firm, to conduct the research. Fusion GPS hired dossier author Christopher Steele, a former British intelligence officer with ties to the FBI and the U.S. intelligence community.

Elias and his law firm, Seattle-based Perkins Coie, retained the firm in April 2016 on behalf of the Clinton campaign and the DNC. Before that agreement, Fusion GPS' research into Trump was funded by a still unknown Republican client during the GOP primary.

The Clinton campaign and the DNC, through the law firm, continued to fund Fusion GPS' research through the end of October 2016, days before Election Day.

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Fusion GPS gave Steele's reports and other research documents to Elias, the people familiar with the matter said. It is unclear how or how much of that information was shared with the campaign and DNC, and who in those organizations was aware of the roles of Fusion GPS and Steele.

The dossier has become a lightning rod amid the investigations into the Trump campaign's possible connections to Russia.

Trump tweeted as recently as Saturday that the Justice Department and FBI should "immediately release who paid for it."

Steele previously worked in Russia for British intelligence. The dossier is a compilation of reports he prepared for Fusion. The dossier alleged the Russian government collected compromising information about Trump and the Kremlin was engaged in an active effort to assist his campaign for president.

U.S. intelligence agencies later released a public assessment, which asserted that Russia intervened in the 2016 election to aid Trump. The FBI has been investigating whether any Trump associates helped the Russians.

Trump has adamantly denied the allegations and has dismissed the FBI probe as a witch hunt.

Fusion GPS' work researching Trump began during the Republican presidential primaries when the GOP donor paid for the firm to investigate.

When the Republican donor stopped paying for the research, Elias, acting on behalf of the Clinton campaign and the DNC, agreed to pay for the work to continue.

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The Clinton campaign paid Perkins Coie \$5.6 million in legal fees from June 2015 to December 2016, according to campaign-finance records, and the DNC paid the firm \$3.6 million in "legal and compliance consulting" since Nov. 2015 — though it's impossible to tell how much of that work was for other legal matters and how much of it related to Fusion GPS.

After the election, the FBI agreed to pay Steele to continue gathering intelligence, but the bureau pulled out of the arrangement after Steele was publicly identified.

The dossier was published by BuzzFeed News in January. Fusion GPS has said it did not give BuzzFeed the document. Officials have said the FBI has confirmed some of the information in the dossier. Other details have yet to be verified and may never be.

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