

You wouldn't be reading this book now assuming Donald Trump, as well as his Congressional supporters, hadn't sued Fusion GPS the private intelligence firm. However, the ardent attempts that Trump's supporters did to discredit Fusion enforced many of formerly confidential information into the whole domain. It was only because of this, that Glenn Simpson and Peter Fritsch were able to write *Crime in Progress*.

Fusion's co-founders -The two investigators —give the correct account of their examination into Trump and his connection with the Russian government. Their story comprises Christopher Steele who was formerly a British spy and his well-known dossier, whose explosive charges spread around intelligence agencies, the media and eventually the entire globe.

Starting in 2015, during the Republican primaries and finishing after the release of the Mueller report in 2019, the story of this inquiry reveals just like a non-fiction thriller. It's has a lot of complications, with one very unpredictable – and extremely powerful –person at its heart.

Chapter 1 - One of the present day's largest political stories started life as a little opposition research report.

A normal aspect of modern-day politics is gathering information on political rivals. As election time gets close, it's a usual thing for private intelligence companies to be employed to do opposition research – examining the histories of political contenders in an attempt to uncover destructive information from their pasts.

However, it's barely common for an “oppo research” report to escalate into various governmental investigations. Still, it is not usual for those investigations to be concentrated on a current president and his likely connections to a possibly unfriendly foreign power.

Still, that was the result when Fusion GPS, the small intelligence firm chose to investigate Donald Trump and his curious ties with Russia.

Glenn Simpson and Peter Fritsch both established Fusion GPS, both of them used to be investigative journalists who came across each other while working at the Wall Street Journal.

At Fusion, they make use of their analytical abilities into finding and explaining difficult, publicly available information—such as financial records and court filings – for a series of private customers.

Usually, Fusion was not working with politicians; however, they worked with customers such as lawyers or hedge fund managers. As a matter of fact, before 2015, they had only worked on just a political campaign. The political campaign was in 2012 when they investigated the dubious financial history of Mitt Romney –who was the Republican contender for president as at then.

Then in 2015, Fusion observed Donald Trump as a related prospect to Romney: a person with a lot of dubious business transactions that they would be well placed to shed light on. Therefore, they tried to look for a client who would pay for an investigation to check Trump, and they discovered a person in the conservative publication the Washington Free Beacon. This was directed by Paul Singer, a billionaire and a Republican opposed to Trump. Fusion was provided a detailed brief; however, but the aim was easy: to look for evidence that would obstruct Trump's effort for the Republican presidential nomination.

Then, they started working

Chapter 2 - Immediately Fusion began investigating Trump, they discovered disturbing information.

Soon enough, Simpson and Fritsch understood just how much there was to investigate. For one thing, they were shocked by the total number of lawsuits that Trump had been associated with during the course of the years. Immediately, they started to notice a pattern among these whole records.

They found out that, it looked like Trump have a routine of magnificently announcing a huge growth such as a new hotel, and gathering big investments. Afterward, the project would not be successful, and the investors would then sue him –just for Trump to assert that he was only a licensor, not the real developer. For example, in 2011, The Trump SoHo project in Manhattan

was looked into for fraud. Trump ultimately had to pay back about \$3 million to the project's sponsors – the money that Trump, as well as his children Don Jr. and Ivanka, had gathered by exaggerating sales amounts in the project's early phases.

Was Trump a con artist? Simpson and Fritsch started suspecting that. Also, there were countless questions about ties money laundering, planned crime and connections to Russia. Felix Sater, a convicted criminal, and Trump's business partner appeared as an early person of interest during the investigation –specifically as a result of the difficult connections between Russia and his company, Bayrock. Fusion had suspicions that a person close to the Kremlin was behind a \$50 million payment that Bayrock got through a strange company in Iceland and that Trump was the ultimate receiver of this money.

There were a lot of other, related cases to investigate. Fusions discovered some extremely disturbing evidence as they monitored the research and started to feel a sense of seriousness about their work.

Although, their discoveries didn't success to make a lot of a splash. Trump's competing contenders for the nomination mainly remained quiet on the matter of his Russian connections, and the stories didn't have particular importance with the crowd amongst the drama of the debates.

While the Fusion investigation gathered steam, Trump was moving forward. Soon enough, Trump's nomination became unavoidable, which signified two things for Fusion: firstly, they will have to keep on with their work. And secondly, they would require a new customer to pay for it –a person who didn't support the Republicans.

Chapter 3 - Working for the Democrats, Fusion employed former spy Christopher Steele – who immediately found unexpected intel.

On the 1st of March 2016 – “Super Tuesday” – Donald Trump was the winner of the nominations of plenty states that his ultimate win in the Republican primaries became obvious. However,

Fusion was resolute to carry on with their work. Very early that morning, Peter Fritsch sent an email to a Democratic Party contact, proposing that they could assist them with research. They ultimately got a new enthusiastic client in the law firm Perkins Coie. Marc Elias was their contact there and also one of the most influential attorneys associated with the Democrats.

Elias was specifically surprised by Fusion's work on the Russian ties. Now, there was the likelihood that the Russians had control over Paul Manafort – a political veteran newly selected to Trump's team as an advisor, who would eventually turn into campaign manager.

Fusion required reporting from abroad in order to investigate all this correctly for their new client. Therefore, during the May 2016, they asked for the help of a former contact: Christopher Steele who was formerly a spy for the British who managed his own private consulting firm, Orbis, in London. While the expertise of Fusion lay in document research, Steele had a connection of Russian sources he could ask for the material.

Steele's actual first report was the one that made history. Released on the 20th of June 2016, Steele's two-and-a-half-page would ultimately be named by the press as the "Steele Dossier". It had some surprising evidence: Russia, with the precise endorsement of Putin, had been nurturing its connection with Trump for five years so they could break the association of Western countries and increase its own fame on the world stage.

The report precisely claimed that the Russians had compromising information on the future US president: a videotape of him seeing numerous prostitutes urinate on a hotel bed which Barack and Michelle Obama slept one time.

This was called kompromat: information that could be used to blackmail. It wasn't only Manafort the Russians had power over –from the report, it could also be Trump himself.

Simpson and Fritsch were surprised and uncertain; however, Steele solidly supported his sources. He guaranteed the Fusion partners that this was good intelligence.

The issue was, it was really good intelligence that Steele mentioned to Simpson he felt a responsibility to report the information to the FBI. That was a question of national security.

Therefore, on the 5th of July 2016, Steele went to meet Michael Gaeta, an FBI contact. Gaeta appreciated him for the evidence and assured him to intensify the issue. However, after that, Steele was encountered with a strange silence.

Chapter 4 - Trump and Putin's mutual respect became increasingly clear, and the FBI started working.

When Steele told the FBI of his findings, the curious connection between Trump and Putin had already begun to become clear. The information of Steele's report was still not generally understood; however, the two people's mutual respect was publicly obvious. On the 17th of June 2016, Putin mentioned that he would embrace a Trump presidency. In response, it appeared as if Trump is directing Republican Party policy towards a more pro-Russia agenda: then in July, he stopped a policy that backed up the insurgents fighting Russia in Ukraine.

Also, disturbing were the disclosures of Democratic Party emails, the first one which happened on the 25th of June, following that, the second one leaked on the 22nd of July—only three days before the Democratic convention. It appeared that Russian fingerprints were all over both leaks. These emails lead to a certain humiliation, as they displayed senior party figures' preference for Hillary Clinton over her contender Bernie Sanders; they quickly caused the resignation of party chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz.

As soon as the 26th of July, after the end of Democrats' conference, Trump gave his possibly most shocking public statement yet: he openly invited Russia to find 30,000 emails of Clinton's that been missing from her private server.

Steele was really shocked by Trump's public invitation for Russian obstruction that he chose to take a trip across the Atlantic, to ensure that the FBI was truly taking his report earnestly. This time around, he came across Bruce Ohr, an old friend of his who worked at the Justice Department. Ohr was surprised by it; however, the FBI was already on the manner. They had started an operation called "Crossfire Hurricane," which would afterward be generally known as the "Trump-Russia investigation."

During early August, John Brennan the CIA director was totally convinced that Russia was responsible for the email hacks of Clinton, with the precise target of helping Trump's campaign. He updated several senior intelligence congressmen and –women; however, they chose to keep everything as a secret

Also, Brennan had gotten in touch with the FSB which is Russia's intelligence agency, with a harsh warning to end their interference. However, they denied about being involved in it– as the following report from Steele alleged – the Russians began to fear at this point, having had their action partly exposed. Putin even sacked Sergei Ivanov, his chief of staff.

Also, the press was eventually starting to understand too.

Chapter 5 - In spite of Fusion's best attempts, the story of Trump-Russia didn't stick in the media – unlike James Comey's interference.

Just like Steele, the Fusion partners were becoming extremely worried about the viewpoint of having a Trump presidency. Therefore, they really tried hard to force the story into the press.

During the September 2016 – when things were becoming very desperate – Fusion persuaded Steele to take another journey to Washington in order for him to brief journalists in person. Steele approved, in spite of worries concerning the anonymity of both himself and his sources.

However, with Steele keeping his sources, the journalists had no means to confirm his discoveries. The only news story that developed from the meeting came from Michael Isikoff of Yahoo News. Michael's article indicated that US intelligence agencies were investigating associations between Carter Page Trump's advisor and the Kremlin – as Steele had verified. The story did bring up a commotion and made Page take a leave of absence; however, the news cycle soon moved on.

All might have transformed on the 7th of October, had it been a more conventional day of news. That afternoon, the government eventually established that the US Intelligence Community was certain that the email hacks were caused by the Russian government, made to ruin the election.

However, afterward, two even more fiery stories came out. The first story was that the Washington Post published the now-infamous video of Trump bragging about holding women “by the pussy.” For a short time, it actually did appear as if it was finished for Trump. But, afterward, another third story came out: a different set of emails from WikiLeaks. This time, they were for John Podesta, Clinton’s campaign chairman. The story didn’t cover the Washington Post’s video completely; however, its careful timing did take the edge off. Obviously, Russia was still doing everything possible to get its man chosen.

Only eleven days before the election, which was on the 28th of October, things became worse. James Comey the FBI director wrote a letter telling the Congress that, as a result of new evidence, the FBI was opening its investigation again into Clinton’s misuse of her email account. It was a massive story – and disturbing for the campaign of Clinton.

Also, it was a New York Times story that came out three days after, named “Investigating Donald Trump, FBI Sees No Clear Link to Russia.” In shocking contrast to the zealous coverage of the FBI’s Clinton investigation, the Times proposed that the FBI’s Trump investigation had come up short.

It’s frequently mentioned that Comey’s involvement was the instant Trump really won the election. That Times story played its role as well.

However, Fusion was more determined than ever before.

Chapter 6 - When the story of Trump-Russia eventually had some media attention, it wasn’t in the way anybody had wished for.

The Fusion team took Donald Trump’s win on the 8th of November election hard; however, they also felt a bigger sense of seriousness about the work they were doing. They had elected

Trump as the president; however, this didn't put a stop to their investigation. Since that was the end of their sponsor, they continued pro bono. However, Simpson and Fritsch weren't the only people attempting to make an impact.

Likewise surprised; also, Christopher Steele was resolute to put in pressure. So, Steele told Sir Andrew Wood his mentor and a former British ambassador to Russia, about his worries. Later in November at a security conference, Wood, had a discreet conversation with David Kramer. Kramer who was an advisor to Senator John McCain, a senior Republican figure famous for his adversarial view toward Russia: the ideal person to apply some pressure on the FBI investigation. As expected, McCain arranged a meeting with James Comey to talk about the matter.

But, what Steele wasn't aware of, was just how dazed Kramer was about the report – and how difficult he would attempt to spread the information. After getting a copy of Steele's reporting from Fusion –just for only McCain's to see, Fusion insisted – Kramer started briefing the matters around Washington. Ultimately, he met with Ken Bensinger, a BuzzFeed reporter who succeeded to get images of the report itself.

About the exact time, on the 6th of January 2017, the US Intelligence Community –including the NSA, CIA, and FBI, together– released their own, official report describing how Moscow had worked to control the election in the favor of Trump. Also, Comey had informed both Barack Obama, the current president, and his soon-to-be successor about the report of Steele. Trump dismissed the entire accusations as false.

The official report wasn't the one that had the biggest splash; however, it was BuzzFeed's brave journalistic choice four days after. On the 10th of January, the website released Bensinger's images of the report. Eventually, the public's concentrated on the astonishing magnitude of Trump's Russian connections; though, obviously, the most scandalous of its accusations– the "golden shower" occurrence – was the one that was everywhere on the headlines.

However, Steele had other worries. He never meant for his real reports to get out to the public. This disclosure entailed that he needed to now be concern about his safety –and also the safety of his sources. Lives were in danger.

Chapter 7 - During the early times of the Trump presidency, Fusion looked for a means to carry on with the investigation – as did the FBI.

As soon as the report was out, Steele went to hide and he was mainly concerned about one of his sources, who was a Russian that was staying in the United States. Aside from these worries, Fusion was having to face an unwelcome bombardment of attention; numerous Republicans in Congress were attempting to expose some kind of conspiracy lying behind the worrying report. The new president as well got involved, constantly tweeting to complain about a “witch hunt.”

In spite of all this, Simpson and Fritsch decided to carry on with their work. They established a new company known as The Democracy Integrity Project, whereby generous donors could indirectly employ Fusion and Orbis to dig up more information on Trump and his connections. The funding they got—particularly from worried tech entrepreneurs on the West Coast—allowed them to proceed.

Fusion tried to look for more material on one-time campaign manager Paul Manafort, still a person of interest with suspicious associations to Russia and Ukraine. Also, they investigated Maria Butina, a young Russian student, who seemed to have curious ties with the National Rifle Association. They had suspicions that Russia probably utilized the NRA to channel funds to Trump supporters.

Meanwhile, the messy start of Trump’s presidency was going toward an astonishing moment on the 9th of May. Trump sacked the leader of the FBI, James Comey, in what was commonly believed to be an attempt to divert their investigation into his connections with Russia.

At first, Trump stated that he sacked Comey because he did a bad work a bad job of investigating Clinton’s emails. He immediately contradicted himself by confessing that sacking Comey had calmed him of “great pressure because of Russia.” To Fusion—and other onlookers—it looked to be obvious evidence that the Russians had leverage over the president.

But, the sacking of Comey’s wasn’t the conclusion of the official investigation into the manner. Only, over a week after, on the 17th of May, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein arranged

a special counsel investigation to thoroughly examine Russia's part in the 2016 election. The previous FBI director Robert Mueller was in charge of the investigation: a very esteemed person, expected to keep political neutrality.

However, this didn't spell the conclusion of the problem for Fusion – not at all.

Chapter 8 - Fusion encountered difficult legal issues as Trump's supporters went on the defensive.

The press was eventually going crazy on stories about Trump and his associations to Russia, with more and more leaks appearing. For example, Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, had proposed creating a secret backchannel between his team as well as that of the Kremlin. More outrageous was the information that Donald Trump Jr. had arranged a meeting with part of the Russian state officials, so he could get dirt on Clinton – the infamous meetings now called as the “Trump Tower meeting.”

But, these leaks didn't come from Fusion themselves, who were occupied with fighting fires at all fronts. Senate Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley, and Chairman Devin Nunes the House Intelligence Committee were the two congressmen who were particularly making life difficult for them. Both of them interrogated Fusion persistently on their investigative part and tried to cast uncertainties on the firm's reliability. Also, both of the congressmen even implied that it was Fusion, and not the Trump campaign, that had been played by the Russians.

On this final point, Grassley, as well as the Nunes, were supported by a remarkable coincidence. Natalia Veselnitskaya, the Russian lawyer was part of the people attending the Trump Tower meeting. This was shocking to the Fusion partners since they had formerly worked together with her on a different case: she had employed an American law firm, where Fusion had done some work. It was a coincidence –however, one that seemed very suspicious for Fusion.

Simpson was required to appear before numerous investigative committees and faced a legal fight over a subpoena for Fusion's bank records. At a point, Fusion was being sued as well by

Michael Cohen who was Trump's onetime lawyer and close friend, who looked to have connections to the Russian; he dropped the charges immediately after the FBI searched his offices. During August of 2018, Cohen eventually ended up turning on Trump and giving proof for Mueller. He was ultimately sent to three years in imprisonment for a variety of criminal charges, as well as tax avoidance.

The story of Cohen is representative of how the reporting of Fusion and Steele's was mainly justified eventually. Yet, Simpson, Fritsch, and Steele anxiously waited for the outcomes of Mueller's investigation.

Chapter 9 - As incriminating as the Mueller's report was, it looks like nothing is going to prevent a recurrence of the so-called 2016 election meddling.

William Barr, Trump's recently elected attorney general was the first one to read Robert Mueller's report – filed on the 22nd of March, 2019. His gloss was that it didn't discover Trump guilty of scheming with the Russians or hindering justice. However, was that what was truly stated by the report?

Barr succeeded to overpower the effect of the report with his weak deductions –however, as a matter of fact, Mueller's report did not even vindicate the president. Instead, it proved many of the things the press had reported, and that Russia did truly attempt to sway the election result in favor of Trump's. Although the report did not let Trump off the hook, it was different from the cathartic conclusion that a lot of people had been anticipating.

As stated by Simpson and Fritsch, there were a lot of reasons for this. One of the reasons was, the policy of the Justice Department which states that a current president could not be criminally charged; that was basically beyond Mueller's scope. A different reason was associated with the magnitude of the project. Mueller had been assigned to investigate the electoral meddling – not the wider network of connections between Trump and Russia that Fusion and Orbis had been trying really hard to expose.

In June of 2019, at the front of Congress, Mueller stated during his testimony that other investigations on Trump association with the Russian association may be proceeding within the FBI. Anything that comes out from these investigations may never be known to the public.

But, the main claims of Steele's report are now well-established. There was certainly a strong Russian attempt to meddle with the election in order to favor Trump, whether or not Trump was an active partaker in this attempt. As you would have thought, the kompromat story has proved really hard to confirm.

Eventually, the authors advise that we should still remain concerned: what occurred in 2016 could occur once again. Are appropriate measures being taken to avoid Russian meddling in the following US election? Simpson and Fritsch warn that the caution they gave in the year 2016 is still as urgent as it has been.

Crime in Progress: Inside the Steele Dossier and the Fusion GPS Investigation of Donald Trump by Glenn Simpson, Peter Fritsch Book Review

Fusion GPS's investigation on Donald Trump's associations to Russia escalated into a thing that even the skilled team of investigators could never have forecast. However, Christopher Steele's report had really sensitive evidence that they didn't have any other than to report it to the authorities. Still living with the astonishing consequence of this at the moment, we may never understand the complete detail of what connects Trump to Russia.

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