

# “Italygate”

*(Excerpt from the June 23, 2022, hearing of the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6 Attack on the United States Capitol)*

**REPRESENTATIVE ADAM KINZINGER (R-IL):** So the final email here included a completely baseless conspiracy theory that an Italian defense contractor uploaded software to a satellite that switched votes from Trump to Biden. The Select Committee investigation found that this wild, baseless conspiracy theory made it from the recesses of the internet to the highest echelons of our government.

On December 31st, Mr. [White House Chief of Staff Mark] Meadows received this internet conspiracy theory from Representative [Scott] Perry [(R-PA)]. On the screen now is the text that Representative Perry sent to Mr. Meadows copying a YouTube link with the message quote, "Why can't we just work with the Italian government?" The next day the President's Chief of Staff sent the YouTube link to Mr. Rosen who forwarded it to Mr. Donoghue.

Mr. Donoghue, did you watch this video?

**RICHARD DONOGHUE, ACTING DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL IN LATE 2020:** I did, Congressman.

**ADAM KINZINGER:** How long was the video?

**RICHARD DONOGHUE:** Approximately 20 minutes.

**ADAM KINZINGER:** Let's just take a look at a excerpt of that video, if we may.

*[Begin Videotape]*

*BRADLEY JOHNSON: What's being said out of Rome, out of Italy is that this was done in the US embassy. That there was a certain State Department guy whose name I don't know yet. I guess this is probably going to come out in Italy at some point. And he was the mastermind – not the mastermind, but the – but the – anyway, the guy running the operation of changing the votes.*

*And that he was done – doing this in conjunction with some support from MI6, the CIA, and this Leonardo group.*

*[End Videotape]*

**ADAM KINZINGER:** Mr. Donoghue, what was your reaction when you watched that entire 20-minute video?

**RICHARD DONOGHUE:** I emailed the acting attorney general and I said pure insanity, which was my impression of the video which was patently absurd.

**ADAM KINZINGER:** Mr. Rosen, you were asked by Mr. Meadows to meet with Mr. Johnson, who is the person in that video, what was your reaction to that request?

**JEFFREY A. ROSEN, ACTING ATTORNEY GENERAL IN LATE 2020:** So ordinarily I'd get an email like this and there was no phone call. It would just come over the transom. But this one he – he called me, Mr. Meadows, and asked me to meet with Mr. Johnson. And I told him this whole thing

about Italy had been debunked and that should be the end of that. And I certainly wasn't going to meet with — with this person.

And he initially seemed to accept that. He said, you know, why won't you meet with them? I said because if — if he has real evidence which this video doesn't show, he can walk into an FBI field office anywhere in the United States, there's 55 of them. And he said, OK. But then he called me — me back a few minutes later and complained, and said, I didn't tell you, but this — this fellow Johnson is working with Rudy Giuliani.

And Mr. Giuliani is really offended that you think they have to go to an FBI field office. That's insulting. So couldn't — couldn't you just have the FBI or you meet with these guys? And by then I was somewhat agitated and told them that there was no way on Earth that I was going to do that. I wasn't going to meet with Mr. Johnson.

I certainly wasn't going to meet with Mr. Giuliani. I'd made that clear repeatedly. And so that's — that's the end of that. You know, don't — don't raise this with me again. And so, because Mr. Donoghue and I had been exchanging our views about this, I think it was, you know, 7:13 on a Friday night of New Year's Day, I had run out of patience.

And I sent the email that you're — you're talking about where I — I made pretty clear that I had no interest in doing anything further with this.

**ADAM KINZINGER:** Just to button this up, Mr. Donoghue, did you receive a follow up call from a Department of Defense official about this conspiracy?

**RICHARD DONOGHUE:** I did. I believe it was that same day.

**ADAM KINZINGER:** Can you give details on that at all?

**RICHARD DONOGHUE:** I received a telephone call from Kash Patel, who I know was a DOD official at that time, worked for, I believe, Acting Secretary of Defense [Christopher] Miller. And he didn't know much about it. He basically said, do you know anything about this Italy thing and what this is all about? And I informed him that the chief of staff had raised the issue with us in his office on December 29th, that we had looked into it a little bit, we had run the name that was provided to us by the chief of staff.

I learned that that individual is in custody in Italy. He had been arrested for a cyber offense of some sort in Italy. The allegation was that he had been exfiltrating data from his company. He was either an employee or a contractor of that company and he was in custody, that the whole thing was very, very murky at best, and the video was absurd.

But that we — we — the department were not going to have anything to do with it. And DOD should make up its own mind as to what they're going to do. But I made it clear to him that I didn't think it was anything worth pursuing.

**ADAM KINZINGER:** So you called the video absurd and despite the absurdity of that conspiracy theory, we learned that Mr. Meadows discussed it frequently in the White House and Mr. Meadows didn't let the matter go. The request went from the Department of Justice to the Secretary of Defense, Christopher Miller. As you'll hear, Secretary Miller actually reached out to a high-ranking official based in Italy to follow up on this claim.

*[Begin Videotape]*

*CHRISTOPHER MILLER: The ask for him was can you call out the defense attaché [in] Rome and find out what the heck's going on? Because I'm getting all these weird crazy reports and probably the guy on the ground knows more than anything.*

*[End Videotape]*

**ADAM KINZINGER:** The Select — Select Committee confirmed that a call was actually placed by Secretary Miller to the attaché in Italy to investigate the claim that Italian satellites were switching votes from Trump to Biden. This is one of the best examples of the lengths to which the President — President Trump would go to stay in power, scouring the Internet to support his conspiracy theories shown here, as he told Mr. Donoghue in that December 27th call, quote, "you guys may not be following the Internet the way I do".

SOURCE:

<https://www.npr.org/2022/06/23/1106700800/jan-6-committee-hearing-transcript>