

EXECUTIVE SESSION  
PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE,  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF: JOHN PODESTA

Tuesday, June 27, 2017

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in Room HVC-304, the Capitol, commencing at 2:40 p.m.

Present: Representatives King, Rooney, Wenstrup, Stewart, Crawford, Schiff, Sewell, Speier, Quigley, Swalwell, and Castro.

Appearances:

For the PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE:

[REDACTED]

For JOHN PODESTA:

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GABE PODESTA, ESQ.

[REDACTED] Good afternoon, everybody. Just a few notes before we begin. This is a transcribed interview of Mr. John Podesta. Thank you for speaking to us today.

For the record, I am [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence on the majority side. Also present today, and we will make announcements down the table.

DR. WENSTRUP: Congressman Brad Wenstrup.

MR. STEWART: Congressman Chris Stewart.

MR. CRAWFORD: Congressman Eric Crawford.

MR. KING: Congressman King.

MR. ROONEY: Tom Rooney.

MR. SCHIFF: Adam Schiff.

MR. QUIGLEY: Mike Quigley.

MR. CASTRO: Joaquin Castro.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

MS. SPEIER: Jackie Speier, California.

MR. SWALWELL: Eric Swalwell.

[REDACTED] And before we begin today, I wanted to state a few things for the record.

The questioning will be conducted by members and staff. During the course of this interview, members and staff may ask questions during their allotted time period. Some questions may seem basic, but that is because we need to clearly establish facts and understand the situation. Please do not assume we

know any facts you have previously disclosed as part of any other investigation or review.

During the course of this interview, we will take any breaks that you desire.

There is a reporter making a recording of these proceedings, so we can easily consult a written compilation of your answers. The reporter may ask you to spell certain terms or unusual phrases you might use, and may ask you to slow down or repeat your answers.

We ask that you give complete and fulsome replies to questions based on your best recollections. If a question is unclear, or you are uncertain in your response, please let us know. And if you do not know the answer to a question or cannot remember, simply say so.

You are entitled to have a lawyer present for this interview, and we see that you do so. At this time, I will ask your attorneys to make an appearance for the record.

MR. ELIAS: Mark Elias on behalf of John Podesta.

MR. GABE PODESTA: Gabe Podesta on behalf of John Podesta.

[REDACTED] Thank you.

As I said, the interview will be transcribed. Because the reporter cannot record gestures, we ask that you answer verbally. If you forget to do this, you might be reminded to do so. You may also be asked to spell certain terms or unusual phrases.

We also ask that you use the microphones whenever asking questions and returning answers.

Consistent with the committee's rules of procedure, you and your counsel, if you wish, will have a reasonable opportunity to inspect the transcript of this

interview in order to determine whether your answers were correctly transcribed. The transcript will remain in the committee's custody. The committee also reserves the right to request your return for additional questions, should the need arise.

The process for interviews is as follows: The majority will be given 40 minutes to question, and the minority will be given 40 minutes to question, at which time, immediately thereafter, we will take a 5-minute break. If further questioning is needed, you will be notified by committee and staff members and we will return.

The time will be kept for each portion of the interview with warnings given at the 5-minute and 1-minute mark respectively.

To ensure confidentiality, we ask that you do not discuss the interview with anyone other than your attorney. Our record today will reflect that you have not been compelled to appear. You are reminded that it is unlawful to deliberately provide false information to Members of Congress or staff.

Lastly, the record will reflect that you are voluntarily participating in this interview, which is under oath.

Mr. Podesta, do you understand these circumstances?

MR. PODESTA: I do.

██████████ Thank you, sir. If you would just raise your right hand so I can administer the oath.

Mr. Podesta, do you answer or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

MR. PODESTA: I do.

██████████ Thank you, sir.

And for a security warning, we are at an unclassified level, but it is committee sensitive.

Thank you all very much. The majority will now have 40 minutes.  
Mr. Rooney.

MR. ROONEY: Thanks, [REDACTED]

Mr. Podesta, welcome. As you know, that we are conducting a series of interviews with witnesses that we hope to, at the end of this process, and I'm hopeful in a bipartisan way, be able to issue a report to the Intelligence Community on the Russian interference with the last election cycle, the lessons learned, how we can better provide oversight to those Intelligence Communities, and how we can avoid any kind of interaction or, you know, influence by the Russians or any other, you know, governmental entity that's trying to disrupt what we hold most dear, and that's our election process in this country.

And we are interviewing witnesses, to the best of your ability, if you could help us write such a report. We don't have the power to indict anybody. This is not, despite what you may hear from time to time, a criminal investigation. That is being conducted by the Justice Department with Bob Mueller.

And so, if there is anything that ever comes out of these interviews that broaches on the criminal, it is our duty and our, I think, obligation to refer that to the Justice Department. We're here simply to try to conduct oversight on the Intelligence Community and to make that situation better.

And in doing so, when you answer your questions, if you could keep that in mind so that we can hopefully provide, like I said, a bipartisan report.

Just for the record, to be clear, you were chairman of the Hillary Rodham Clinton presidential campaign in 2016?

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MR. PODESTA: In 2015 through 2016.

MR. ROONEY: Okay. Your --

MR. PODESTA: Just at the outset, may I just apologize for us being a little bit late. We got hung up in security.

MR. ROONEY: I was glad you were late because I beat you by about 30 seconds, so --

MR. PODESTA: Go ahead. I'm happy to comply in any way.

MR. ROONEY: These are a couple just yes or no questions. The Podesta Group, of which you were a member of, a lobbying firm, what's your relationship with the Podesta Group?

MR. PODESTA: None.

MR. ROONEY: What has it been in the past?

MR. PODESTA: I founded the firm with my brother in 1998. I left in 1992.

MR. ROONEY: 1998 to 1992?

MR. PODESTA: I'm sorry, in 1988. I started the firm with my brother in 1988. I left in 1992 to join the Clinton White House staff, and actually in early 1993. I returned as a consultant to the firm after the Clinton administration, resigned from that responsibility in the spring of 2003, and have had no relationship with them since then. So for 14 years, I've had no relationship.

MR. ROONEY: Since 2003?

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

MR. ROONEY: Okay. So after you left the White House until 2003, you acted as a consultant. Do any of those dealings have anything to do with Russia?

MR. PODESTA: No.

MR. ROONEY: Let's talk about the thing that, unfortunately, you've

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become most famous for probably over the last year, and that's your email hacking of your personal email. When did you first learn of your personal email account was hacked?

MR. PODESTA: Well, the first I was certain that it had to have been hacked was on October 7, 2016, when WikiLeaks began to release the emails.

MR. ROONEY: So it was when WikiLeaks started releasing them that -- who made you aware of that? Like how did you know that it was based on your email account that --

MR. PODESTA: Because Julian Assange posted that to their website or someplace.

MR. ROONEY: How did that happen? Do you -- are you aware fully of how he hacked you or, you know, there was reports out there that --

MR. PODESTA: Well, I don't believe WikiLeaks did hack me, but I assume that's what this inquiry is all about.

MR. ROONEY: Okay. What do you believe?

MR. PODESTA: I think the hacks were conducted by the -- by agents of Russian intelligence.

MR. ROONEY: What makes you think that?

MR. PODESTA: You know, obviously, I'm not a technical expert --

MR. ROONEY: That is fine.

MR. PODESTA: -- but there has been a lot of forensics done, including by the U.S. Government, and, I think, 17 agencies to the U.S. Intelligence Community have included that the Russians were behind the hacks of both my emails and the DNC emails.

MR. ROONEY: Do you know how they -- have you been made aware how



they conducted those hackings?

MR. PODESTA: Do I know how the Russians hacked my email?

MR. ROONEY: Yeah.

MR. PODESTA: Again, I have only -- I had no information at the time. Subsequent to that, the people inside our campaign tried to reconstruct what might have happened, and I believe concluded -- although this -- again, I didn't do the forensics on this, but our security experts concluded that there was a phishing attempt that occurred using a Google prompt in May of 2016.

I had two associates of mine, staff, people who worked with me, who had access to the accounts, to my account. One of them asked one of our security people whether to click through and was told to do so, and the other person actually clicked through. And that's our surmise. I have no certain knowledge of this, but that's our surmise of what happened.

MR. ROONEY: Do you think that was just human error, or do you think that there was anything more to those people doing that?

MR. PODESTA: Oh, I think --

MR. ROONEY: You don't have any information that those two people were working for nefarious reasons?

MR. PODESTA: No.

MR. ROONEY: Okay. When you learned of the hacking, did you turn the servers or emails over to law enforcement or assist them in discovering details of the hack?

MR. PODESTA: That was my Google account, so the servers were on Google.

MR. ROONEY: Oh, okay. Did you notify law enforcement when you

learned of this, when it was made public or it got out there?

MR. PODESTA: I didn't notify law enforcement because I assumed they were watching television since it was on CNN.

MR. ROONEY: Okay. When did you meet with law enforcement?

MR. PODESTA: I've never met with anybody on this matter. The FBI contacted me by telephone on October 9, and I had a conversation with an agent whose name I probably had, but no longer have.

MR. ROONEY: So besides the telephone call, how many times did you talk with this FBI agent?

MR. PODESTA: Once.

MR. ROONEY: How long did -- how extensive was that interview?

MR. PODESTA: He informed me that he believed that my email account had been hacked. I told him that I was aware of that, since it was on television for the last 48 hours, and I told him that I was happy to cooperate in any way that they thought appropriate. And he thanked me for that and said, you know, if they needed me, they would be back to me.

MR. ROONEY: I'm going to ask some of my colleagues to join in on any questions that they may have, but before I do that, I was wondering, just based on, you know, having gone through all that you've gone through in the last year, is there anything that you can assist with this committee in helping us understand the Russia -- and, I mean, this could be just your opinion, but since you were, you know, part of the center of this whole thing, and are obviously an extremely intelligent person, with regard to the Russia hacking and the WikiLeaks and the dispersement of emails during the campaign, was there anything that led you to believe that this was a coordinated effort?

Obviously, you implied that it was coordinated from Russia and Julian Assange. But was there anything that led you to believe other than, you know, an opinion that there was a coordination between Russia, Julian Assange, and anybody from the Trump campaign?

MR. PODESTA: Well, I would say there are a couple of data points that are at least worth your exploring on this committee: One is that Mr. Trump, prior to the WikiLeaks dump that occurred right before the Democratic convention, publicly asked the Russians to continue to hack Hillary Clinton's emails.

MR. ROONEY: This was the one where he was on the stump saying that?

MR. PODESTA: Yeah. Then subsequent to that, and subsequent to the Democratic Convention, in August of 2016, a couple of different statements by Roger Stone, who is an associate of Mr. Trump's, at least raised suspicions in my mind. One was that he was saying that he was in touch with Mr. Assange. I think he subsequently said that that wasn't true, but he said that at the time.

And then shortly thereafter, I think in conjunction with when the Trump campaign fired Paul Manafort, he tweeted out that it will soon be John Podesta's turn in the barrel. I may have the timing --

MR. ROONEY: What does that mean?

MR. PODESTA: I may have the timing slightly off, but I think that's --

MR. ROONEY: What did you interpret that to mean?

MR. PODESTA: I interpreted that to mean, particularly given the fact that he was going around speaking to different groups and arguing that WikiLeaks was about to release damaging information, that those two things might be connected. I didn't know that, but that was like a reasonable suspicion on my part.

I think he subsequently continued to kind of point towards release of

documents that could occur throughout the period of September. And then, of course, the documents were released on October 7 --

MR. ROONEY: Do you have any --

MR. PODESTA: -- began to be released.

MR. ROONEY: Yeah. Aside from Trump saying, I really hope that the Russians -- or the WikiLeaks releases these emails during a stump speech or that Roger Stone -- and hopefully, we get him in here and are able to talk to him -- with regard to that timing that you were talking about.

With your time with the campaign or independently of the campaign, did you learn of anything specific that you knew that there was coordination between actual campaign officials and Russia and the timing of these releases other than just saying I hope that they release more emails because it's good for me that he does that?

MR. PODESTA: You know, as I said, I think there's a -- there was reporting ongoing at the time, but I have no specific facts or information relating to conversations that may have been had between people from the Trump campaign and either Assange or representatives of the Russian Government, other than what I've read in the paper. But there's a lot in the paper.

MR. ROONEY: Mr. Podesta, I may have more questions.

██████ can you keep us updated onto what our time is just so we're not --

██████████ Yes, sir. Our round goes until 3:22.

MR. ROONEY: Okay. Any other members on the majority have questions? Mr. King.

MR. KING: During the campaign did anybody in the Justice Department administration tell you that Russia may be involved?

MR. PODESTA: No.

MR. KING: There was no talk of an investigation at all?

MR. PODESTA: Are you talking about the FBI investigation?

MR. KING: Either the FBI or --

MR. PODESTA: I didn't know about that until subsequent to the election.

MR. KING: How about the Obama administration, so for the White House, anybody in the administration?

MR. PODESTA: No. The only person who I spoke with who was quite concerned, I think, about what was going on but was not specific in terms of what his level of information was was Senator Reid. I know that he had been briefed in August.

I've subsequently read that he'd been briefed by the Intelligence Committee, but I knew that he had been briefed by the Intelligence Committee. He didn't tell me who he had been briefed by, didn't tell me the substance of the briefing, but he told me he was extremely concerned about the engagement and involvement. And I think in that conversation, we were talking about potential Russian interference in the election.

MR. KING: I didn't expect to be asking questions. I'm going off the top of my head with this one. I thought somebody, before the election or right afterwards, Mrs. Clinton made a reference that she'd been told that the Russians might be involved or look out for Russian involvement.

MR. PODESTA: By someone in the --

MR. KING: Well, I don't know.

MR. PODESTA: By someone in the administration?

MR. KING: Probably someone told her.

MR. PODESTA: I think -- look, the first time the DNC leaks had -- were reported, which was in June of 2016, by The Washington Post, after the forensic experts, who the DNC brought in to understand what had happened to their computers -- Crowd Strike -- yeah, Crowd Strike, had already identified, and there was a bunch of independent verification that two units of Russian intelligence, one from the FSB, one from the GRU had attacked the DNC computers.

So she was certainly aware of that. But I don't believe -- I am not aware that she was briefed by the U.S. Government about what they knew about what was going on.

MR. KING: I thought I had a recollection of her saying that somebody in the Intelligence Community or intelligence people had told her to look out for Russia. But, again, I wasn't prepared to ask these questions.

MR. PODESTA: Congressman, if she said that, I don't know what that was referenced to.

MR. KING: Okay.

MR. ROONEY: Mr. Stewart.

MR. SCHIFF: We're more than amenable to have as many members ask questions as we wish, but the rules that Mike and I agreed to, we would have two members and staff ask questions for each witness. I'm more than happy to depart from those and have --

MR. ROONEY: No, no. I didn't know that you and Mike had agreed to that. I don't even know if these guys have questions.

MR. SCHIFF: I'm more than happy to open up to all the members and if the members would like to ask questions, but I just want to make sure that we're knowingly altering the procedure, which is perfectly fine.

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MR. ROONEY: Yeah. I apologize for altering the procedure. It's not intended.

MR. SCHIFF: No, I'm more than amenable. I just want to make sure that we understand what we're doing.

MR. ROONEY: Who are your members?

MR. SCHIFF: Well, I would invite all of our members to ask questions who are interested in asking questions. So anyway, I'm perfectly copacetic, but I just want to make sure that we'll both have that opportunity.

MR. ROONEY: Well, I just -- I was thinking along the lines of that we had until 3:20 on our side. And then we'll take a break, and then the minority has --

██████████ The same amount of time, sir. Approximately 4:00, I believe, you all have votes so we were pushing on that schedule.

MR. ROONEY: So whatever you want to do.

MR. SCHIFF: Let's allow other members to ask.

MR. ROONEY: Do any of the other members on the majority have questions?

MR. STEWART: I don't think this is key, but I'm curious, sir, when you were discussing the hacking of your email with either the FBI when they contacted you or subsequent officials, did they indicate to you their knowledge that Republican entities had also had their emails hacked? Was that ever discussed?

MR. PODESTA: No. I've subsequently read that, but they didn't discuss that with me.

MR. STEWART: Okay.

MR. ROONEY: Brad, do you have anything?

DR. WENSTRUP: No, I'm good.

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MR. ROONEY: I don't know how you want to proceed. I mean, I know that Mr. Gowdy is coming late. But did we agree that after the minority goes, we would have time again?

██████████ Yes, sir, if need be.

MR. ROONEY: Like yesterday?

██████████ Yes, sir.

MR. ROONEY: Okay. So with that, do you want to just yield to the Democrats for their line of questioning?

██████████ That's fine, sir.

MR. ROONEY: And then if the majority is still here, or the members that are still here after the minority goes, we'll have another chance to follow up if you have anything.

So, Adam.

MR. SCHIFF: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for being here, Mr. Podesta.

There are really, I guess, four areas that I'd like to inquire about, and then I'll turn it over to Ms. Sewell and my colleagues as well as our staff. And probably, the staff will be much more methodical than the members in terms of going through the foundational questions.

MR. PODESTA: I've been on that side of the table.

MR. SCHIFF: We're just going to go for the highlights. So let me start with one, because there has been a lot of, I think, confusion on this point, and that is, we've had ample testimony in open session that there was no changing of the vote count in the machines. That has been conflated with there was no effect of the dumping of the emails on the election itself, or the potential outcome of the



election.

So let me ask you, as the campaign manager for one of the presidential candidates --

MR. ELIAS: Chair.

MR. SCHIFF: I'm sorry, campaign chair, what do you think the effect of the continual dumping of the emails was on your campaign? And can you quantify it for us in any terms? Let me start with that.

MR. PODESTA: Well, look, I think the manner in which it was done, constant release, day by day, from October 7 through the election, was intended to inflict damage on the campaign by keeping the press focused on whatever tidbits of campaign gossip they might find in those emails, and to distract from the ability to be talking about the real issues in the campaign.

I think the timing of the first release is also relevant. In the wake of -- on the same day, the letter from Jeh Johnson and Jim Clapper noting that the Intelligence Community had concluded that the Russians were involved in active measures, as it were -- not quoting from the letter, but you remember that letter on October 7 -- followed by the release of the Access Hollywood tape. And within a half an hour of that release, the emails started to get dumped. So I think that was --

MR. SCHIFF: I'm sorry, which emails were dumped?

MR. PODESTA: My emails were starting to get dumped, the first Assange posting, the first set of emails. Then that drip, drip, drip occurred on a daily basis through the election. I think it was -- that was intended. And, you know, if Mr. Assange was only interested in transparency, he would just put them all out on day 1, but he didn't do that.

I think it was intended to damage the campaign. And I think it had some effect of damaging the campaign by having the constant topic and swirl of emails being covered on a virtually daily basis.

I think our -- if you look at linking that back to the end of the campaign, I think that while these are separated events, I think then the decision by Director Comey to open up the investigation that occurred 11 days before the election gets -- sort of got conflated with all this.

And I think there's no question that it had some effect and a negative effect on our campaign. How do we quantify that? That's hard to say.

MR. SCHIFF: One of the issues that we're looking at is the potential of a coordination or collusion between the Russians and the Trump campaign. You mentioned that the timing of the dumping of some of the emails was correlated to maximize its impact adversely to the Clinton campaign.

One of the things I wanted to ask you is, did you see anything in the sophistication of how the emails were dumped, either their timing or the particular emails that were dumped, that would lead you to believe that a foreign power acting on its own would not necessarily have the sophistication to know the impact on the campaign or the timing, or even the geography of the campaign?

MR. PODESTA: Well, I think there's a -- now, as I said, obviously, the first dump right in front of the Democratic National Convention was intended to step on our ability to run a successful convention. The coincidence of timing that the WikiLeaks dump of my emails occurred just after the Access Hollywood taped seemed -- at least it was a big coincidence.

The rest of the dumping was a little bit, you know, it was just everyday there was just a little bit more. And I think that there was, you know, whether that was

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Mr. Assange's own idea of what might, as I said, inflict damage on our candidate, or whether he was getting some help, I have no way of knowing.

I think the one other fact, I guess, I would point the committee to -- and I'm not an expert on this, but I would point the committee to -- was the DCCC was also hacked. And certain information was dumped in the context of the Republican Florida primaries.

Now, that -- you know, someone -- that, at least in my mind, raises the question of, you know, someone sitting in, you know, the former Soviet Union knowing what information to dump to take out a Democratic challenger to a Republican candidate in a House Florida race seems a high level of sophistication for Russian intelligence.

But I don't know whether you're looking at that, but I would recommend that you -- maybe somebody wants to take a look at that one.

MR. ROONEY: Can you explain that again, the DCCC was hacked and was --

MR. PODESTA: The DCCC was hacked in the Democratic primaries.

MR. ROONEY: Oh, okay. I'm sorry.

MR. SCHIFF: Yeah, and there's more on that we can go into. I think that there were opposition research files that were dumped also --

MR. PODESTA: That's correct.

MR. SCHIFF: -- in a Florida race.

But there were at least three vehicles used for the dumping of stolen emails. You had WikiLeaks and Julian Assange. You had DCLeaks and you had Guccifer 2. The unclassified assessment -- and I don't have the precise language, but essentially views Guccifer 2 and perhaps DCLeaks as more direct

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Russian cutouts as opposed to WikiLeaks, which at least has either a complicit party, a useful idiot, or something in between.

With respect to the more direct outlets of Guccifer 2 and DCLeaks, were there any aspects of the documents that they dumped, or the timing in which they dumped it that demonstrated a sophistication beyond what you would expect of a foreign intelligence service in terms of knowing the intricacies of the campaign and what would be most advantageous to the Trump campaign or disadvantageous to the Clinton campaign?

MR. PODESTA: I don't think I -- I would have to go back and re-examine that. I don't know that I can point you to something specific in those particular dumps, which occurred earlier that would point to that. I just don't know.

MR. SCHIFF: Let me go back to the first question I asked just to flesh it out a little further, if I could, with you, and that is the impact of all the dumping of this on the presidential race. There are few people probably better situated to comment on that.

What did the dumping of this information force your campaign to do? How did it affect the messages you were trying to get out? What was the opportunity cost of all of this, so that we get a sense at least of its influence on the direction of the campaign, and therefore the direction of the election outcome?

MR. PODESTA: Well, we obviously had to stand up a full team inside the campaign to basically understand what was coming out, and to be able to deal with then a flood of reporting that occurred.

I think you put your finger on what the real cost to us was, which was it was an opportunity cost, because if you're spending 2 hours a day on cable news talking about, as I said, you know, internal staff memos, that was 2 hours you

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weren't spending talking about what you wanted to do for the American people.

And I think that was, in the end of the day, costly. I do think it was also -- ended up being conflated with the email server story and, again, the interaction between keeping this essentially at a low simmer, then combined with the boil that occurred later when Mr. Comey sent his letter to the Hill was -- again, it's intangible. But that's where we saw -- that interaction is when we saw numbers -- our numbers begin to move in a negative way.

MR. SCHIFF: And I know it's impossible to say with precision, but in your view, is it at least possible, if not more than possible, that the combination of the daily dumping of emails and its commingling with the Comey letter and the email investigation ultimately proved to be a decisive factor in the loss?

MR. PODESTA: Well, look, we lost the electoral college by losing three States by 70,000 votes in a campaign which we won by 3 million votes at a national level. So you can blame a lot of things for that. But certainly, I think, to the extent this had a negative effect, there are a lot of factors that can move 70,000 votes.

MR. SCHIFF: But you would agree that it could have been a potentially decisive factor, along with other factors?

MR. PODESTA: I think it was an important factor.

MR. SCHIFF: I want to turn, if I can, to the issue of potential collusion, and go back over something that you mentioned at the outset. When did you first learn that your computer, your emails may have been hacked?

MR. PODESTA: We had some suspicion of that without full knowledge in early July, maybe late June or early July. Because some of those -- some of the earliest dumps that were done by DCLeaks contained documents that didn't

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appear belonged inside the DNC and, you know, housed in the DNC.

So it was clear they had hacked the DNC and they were putting documents out from the DNC, but there were some documents that involved internal deliberations, fundraising strategies, et cetera, other documents that appeared to come from people inside the campaign.

And I think the campaign, at that point, identified some as perhaps coming from my Gmail account, coming from Ambassador Marshall's Gmail account, and, perhaps, from other Gmail accounts, including some of the younger staff on the campaign who were basically advanced people on the campaign.

So there was some sense that there was a group of documents that didn't sort of seem like they belonged at the DNC, and so our suspicions were raised, but we weren't certain at that point what had happened.

And I think the -- we were, of course, on guard and trying to ensure that the hacking was, you know, kept out of the campaign, but that was probably the first moment where we thought that they may have happened.

MR. SCHIFF: So let me just go over the timeline, and some of this you would not necessarily have been aware of at the time. But in March of 2016, March 19 of 2016, a spear phishing email is sent to your personal account.

And that is, I think, when the interaction you described earlier takes place where one of your aides asks another whether that spear phishing email is legitimate, and they're told that it is, but they meant to say it was illegitimate, and someone clicks on it. Is that your understanding of what took place?

MR. PODESTA: Again, I don't have the date. You have more information than I do. But that is essentially my understanding of what happened. I was not aware of it at the time.

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MR. SCHIFF: So in March --

MR. PODESTA: And I think that was Russia retroactively, that people inside the campaign tried to figure that out.

MR. SCHIFF: Right. So at the time that this is happening, presuming I've got my date correct, March 19, when the spear phishing email is clicked on by your staff, they don't know obviously -- or at least one knew it was illegitimate, one didn't, and there was miscommunication, it gets clicked on. But no one brings this to your attention at the time, because they're not sure that this is either a hack or the Russians are behind it. They would have no reason to know?

MR. PODESTA: Right.

MR. SCHIFF: So the first that you really begin to suspect you might have been hacked is in July when there's discussion about whether certain documents that DCLeaks have published, came from the DNC or might have come from your own email?

MR. PODESTA: That's correct.

MR. SCHIFF: The next month, in August, is -- let's see -- the next month is August when, I believe, Mr. Stone predicts that you're going to have your time in the barrel. So this is right after you've gotten the first inkling that you may have been hacked. Roger Stone, someone affiliated with the Trump campaign, is saying that your time in the barrel is coming. Were you aware that he said that or tweeted that at the time that he did?

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

MR. SCHIFF: And did you have any suspicion what he might be referring to? Did you -- in light of the fact that you thought in July that you may have been hacked, did you think that might be what he was referring to?

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MR. PODESTA: Well, as I said to Mr. Rooney, he was also, I think, just previous to that, saying that he was in touch -- WikiLeaks had already dumped the DNC emails, that he was in touch with Assange and was, you know, issuing sort of in the way Roger Stone does vague predictions of doom and gloom for our campaign.

I think probably at that point, at least in my mind, those two things got connected. But obviously, as we're in a fast-paced campaign, we're worrying about a lot of different things. Back in July, I didn't -- I was concerned, but I was trying to, as best I could, do the other work that I had in the campaign.

At that point, I thought, well, maybe something -- there's something to this, but I still had no real understanding or knowledge about the full extent of what had happened.

MR. SCHIFF: But at the time in August that Roger Stone is tweeting that you're going to have your time in the barrel, you and your staff are the only people that suspect you may have been hacked. This wasn't a matter of public knowledge at that point, right?

MR. PODESTA: Correct.

MR. SCHIFF: So it's not as if Roger Stone could be getting this from CNN?

MR. PODESTA: True.

MR. SCHIFF: The DNC hack would have been public knowledge at this point, but not your own hack?

MR. PODESTA: Right.

MR. SCHIFF: And at some later point, Mr. Stone tweeted that he had a back channel to WikiLeaks only to, an hour later, delete that tweet. Were you

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aware of that?

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

MR. SCHIFF: Later in October, Mr. Stone continues tweeting and says that Assange is about to come through essentially with another important dump and that the -- it's only a matter of days. That preceded the dumping of your emails by only a matter of days. Is that your recollection?

MR. PODESTA: My recollection of that week is that I -- you know, again, lots going on, so I don't have a precise recollection of when his tweet occurred and when these leaks began. But I do remember that he did that.

Ambassador Marshall's emails were leaked earlier in the week, and so at that point, it seemed -- and just to go back, we had identified that there were other accounts and Ambassador Marshall's is one of them that may have been hacked.

WikiLeaks starts leaking her emails, and then it isn't until Friday that they started leaking mine. So when his tweet occurs in the course of that week, I'm not -- I can't precisely predict, although I guess that's knowable. But those events occurred during that week.

MR. SCHIFF: And this may help refresh your recollection, October 1, Mr. Stone tweets, "Wednesday @HillaryClinton is done, hash tag WikiLeaks."

On October 3, he Tweets, "I have total confidence that @WikiLeaks and my hero Julian Assange will educate the American people soon, hash tag, lock her up."

And October 7, WikiLeaks first publishes your emails.

MR. PODESTA: Right.

MR. SCHIFF: Is that about the chronology that you remember?

MR. PODESTA: Yeah.

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MR. SCHIFF: Now, Mr. Stone has been --

MR. PODESTA: My only point, Congressman, was in the -- probably on Wednesday -- or Tuesday or Wednesday of that, the assault began but started with Ambassador Marshall.

MR. SCHIFF: Now, you made reference to the fact that some of what Mr. Stone said at the time and thereafter he has attempted to walk back in terms of his relationship with Julian Assange. Part of his explanation for his tweets is that he wasn't talking about your emails, he was talking about some business dealings that he expected Mr. Assange to publish.

Did Mr. Assange ever publish anything about any alleged business dealings?

MR. PODESTA: Not that I'm aware of.

MR. SCHIFF: Do you have any idea what he is supposedly referring to in that explanation?

MR. PODESTA: No.

MR. SCHIFF: Let me ask you about the DNC and the U.S. Government response, to the degree you can help us on this. What role did you have in the cybersecurity at the DNC? At what point were you made aware of the hack of the DNC? Can you tell us a little bit about that chronology?

MR. PODESTA: Well, I had no role in the cybersecurity of the DNC. I was made aware of the hack shortly before it became public information. If my memory serves me, the California primary was June 6, whatever the Tuesday was.

Shortly thereafter, a few days thereafter, I was informed that the DNC -- this probably would have been late that week -- that the DNC's computers had been

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hacked; that they had engaged a firm called Crowd Strike; and that they were going to brief the press that this had occurred and they were taking measures to remedy as best they could the problems that this was causing.

I was briefed on that before it was reported, but by a matter of days. I think that would have been Thursday or Friday, and I think the story appeared on Monday.

MR. SCHIFF: And, again, what period would that have been in?

MR. PODESTA: This would have probably been June 10 or 11, something like that.

MR. SCHIFF: There have been a number of --

MR. PODESTA: Yeah, that probably would have been 10th or 11th.

MR. SCHIFF: I'm sorry, the 10th of what?

MR. PODESTA: 10th or 11th of June.

MR. SCHIFF: 10th or 11th of June. I don't know if it's helpful, but June 14 is the date The Washington Post publicly reported that the DNC had been a victim of hacking.

MR. PODESTA: It's just in advance of that.

MR. SCHIFF: So you would have learned about this for the first time just in advance of that?

MR. PODESTA: Yes.

MR. SCHIFF: And so the prior interaction that the FBI had the previous fall with the DNC about the hack, was that not brought to your attention?

MR. PODESTA: No.

MR. SCHIFF: And are you in a position at all to comment on the allegations about whether the FBI or DHS sought the DNC server? Was that ever

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brought to your attention, that issue? So you can't comment on whether they ever sought it?

Director Comey testified -- I'm sorry, was that a no?

MR. PODESTA: No.

MR. SCHIFF: Director Comey testified that the FBI ended up getting the information they needed from Crowd Strike. Do you have any insight into that?

MR. PODESTA: No, I was really not engaged in that.

MR. SCHIFF: We have 15 minutes until the break, so I am going to -- thank you. I am going to hand it over to Ms. Sewell.

MS. SEWELL: Thank you, Mr. Podesta, for being here today.

I wanted to turn to sort of best practices, lessons learned. Part of our job is not only to try to figure out how the Russians interfered, but also what we can do in the future to prevent it from happening.

So, I guess, my first question is, how much involvement did you have in the security IT of the presidential campaign, Hillary's campaign?

MR. PODESTA: I was -- you know, my role as the chair was, at some level, supervisory over the entire campaign. But the people who were -- our chief technology officer, et cetera, report to the campaign manager. So they were not like my direct reports or people that I was meeting with on a daily basis.

MS. SEWELL: Once the hacking was acknowledged, or there was an inkling within the campaign that it occurred, your personal hacking, what measures were taken by the campaign to ward against it? And hindsight being 20/20, would you do anything differently?

MR. PODESTA: Well, I think that we had very skilled professionals on the technology side and on the cybersecurity side. To the best of my knowledge, the

campaign's own servers, not because people didn't try, but there were no successful hacks of the campaign servers. The hacks of the people involved in the campaign occurred in private email accounts, Gmail accounts, maybe others, but principally, Gmail accounts.

I think that everyone in the campaign was perhaps aware that, particularly with these sophisticated state actors, that that was a plausible scenario. In the past, that -- I think -- again, I know not much about this, but I know something about it. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. SEWELL: [REDACTED]

MR. PODESTA: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

So they were done -- they were targeted as intelligence operations. I think what was unique about 2016 in the U.S. context, not in the European context, but in the U.S. context, was the weaponization of the fruits of those hacks to actually influence the outcome of the election.

Now, we've seen that prior to this, but largely by the Russians in their own backyard in Estonia, in Georgia, in places like that. We've now subsequently seen that extended in France, in Germany, and, you know, other western

democracies. But that, I think, is an escalation that --

MS. SEWELL: Given that escalation --

MR. PODESTA: -- we haven't seen in the U.S. context before.

MS. SEWELL: True. Right. Given that U.S. escalation, what would you suggest we should do in future -- what would you do differently in future campaigns given the sophisticated nature of the threat, be it from, you know, domestic hackers or a sophisticated foreign -- what would you -- you know, if you were leading a presidential campaign in the future, what would you advise that should happen? What coordination, if any, should be -- would occur?

MR. PODESTA: Yeah, I think, there's -- look, there's a bit of an arms race going on here. I think the capacity to contract for the best cybersecurity services is critical now for campaigns, for campaign-like entities like the DNC.

We've all, obviously, learned the lesson the hard way. I think that's also true for individuals who might be subject to probes by the -- by, as I said, these very sophisticated actors.

MS. SEWELL: So really looking at both personal emails of staff and campaign workers as well as the overall server and communication that occurs within the campaign?

MR. PODESTA: Yes, absolutely. So I think there's just going to have to be more depth, more money spent on this with the anticipation that it's going to happen again. I think that, you know, hopefully, the U.S. Government can develop a policy which will deter this action.

The administration and the President's interaction with President Putin when they were at the G-20, I guess, in China, and the messages that were being sent were done for the purposes of deterrence, but they were unsuccessful.

But there are other -- you know, there's legislation that's passed the Senate, pending in the House, to further sanction the Russians for, you know, in part for these activities.

And I think that there's going to have to be a full sweep of policy development on behalf of the U.S. Government to push back on State action, but obviously, the campaigns themselves are going to have to up their investments in this.

MS. SEWELL: What kind of coordination would you suggest should occur between political campaigns and FBI or government? That's the first question.

And then secondly, you know, should there be some sort of formal communication between the proper Federal authorities and political campaigns when it comes to cybersecurity and how the government communicates to the campaigns and political parties what's going on?

Because at the end of the day, you know, the Federal Government may know about it way before you know about it, and there has to -- to your point, they're becoming much more sophisticated in their efforts to spear phish. So what would you suggest should be the level of cooperation, coordination --

MR. PODESTA: Well, look, I think, you know, it's always judgment calls, because almost always the information the government is receiving is being -- has been done through classified channels. It's a judgment call on their part about how much they can disclose to the potential target of the hack.

I think in this case, it was precious little, quite frankly, and I think that the capacity of the government to work with both in the political context and democratic context with respect to State agencies who need to protect their own systems, with respect to companies that are providing software to, again, to the

voting structure -- not just the campaigns but the voting structures more broadly.

I think sharing more information would be useful than was done in the 2016 context. Now, they're going to have to make a judgment about how did they learn about it? What did they know? How much can they tell? I think in this case they erred on the side of --

MS. SEWELL: Minimal communication.

MR. PODESTA: -- yeah, minimal communication.

MS. SEWELL: So if you were -- I mean, do you feel that, given what happened, that there needs to be a minimal standard of cybersecurity in place? And is it -- is there a role for government --

MR. PODESTA: I think at this point now it's going to be -- because, look, this was a -- there was a lot of return on investment for the Russians on this, so I suspect we'll see them again. I don't know who they're going to be going after. It might be on the Democratic side. Maybe it will be on the Republican side, but I suspect, given the return they got on this investment, they'll be back here. So I think it's going to be more than minimal.



[3:35 p.m.]

MS. SEWELL: So our work is cut out for us, it seems, when it comes to sort of figuring out that balance between the judgment calls that have to be made, and really, protecting our democracy, for lack of a better word.

MR. PODESTA: Yes. And I think it also requires, at a policy level, coordination with our democratic allies who are also under assault. And, you know, again, we saw that very vividly -- it happened late, I think the French were more prepared, because they had seen what happened in the U.S. election, and the structure of the law in France.

MS. SEWELL: So coordination across our allies as well.

MR. PODESTA: Yeah. Particularly with our European allies.

MS. SEWELL: Thank you, sir.

MR. SCHIFF: I will ask our last question before I hand it over to my colleagues. Just a couple last data points on the issue of on August 9th, Mr. Stone said he communicated with Assange. August 16th, he engages in private messaging with Guccifer II, essentially communicating with a Russian intelligence agent masquerading as Guccifer II. August 17th, private message back to Roger Stone saying he is prepared to help Mr. Stone in any way. And then August 21st, after being in contact with Guccifer II and acknowledging communication with Julian Assange, Mr. Stone says that your time in the barrel is coming. Any further insight you can shed?

MR. PODESTA: Seems like a lot of smoke there, Mr. Schiff. But you have stated the facts as I understand them.

██████████ Sorry, sir, just 4 minutes, sir, on your time.

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MR. SCHIFF: Do my colleagues have some questions they would like to ask?

MR. ROONEY: Before you start, apparently we are going to get called to vote at any time. Without any objection for you, do you need to use the men's room or anything? If you just want to keep going until we get called to vote rather than take a break and then -- because we just got notice that it could be at any minute. Let the members ask their questions, you guys can finish, and then Brad has a question. And then we leave, then the staff can go, if that's okay? Unless you had to take a break.

MR. ELIAS: How long will the staff then have, just so I understand procedurally?

MR. ROONEY: Fifteen. Yeah.

MR. SWALWELL: Mr. Podesta, thank you for coming down. Were others on the campaign attacked in a similar spear-phishing way as you were that have not been made publicly available?

MR. PODESTA: Mr. Swalwell, I don't -- I can't -- I have no knowledge about the means of attack. I know they were attacked. So there were, as I said, there were a number of lower level staff, and I noted the attack on Ambassador Marshall. But whether that was done in the similar fashion or through different means, I am not aware.

MR. SWALWELL: And were those attacks on their campaign emails or their personal?

MR. PODESTA: Personal emails.

MR. SWALWELL: Who were those individuals?

MR. PODESTA: I think we probably could provide you with the list of

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names, but I don't have them off the top of my head.

MR. SWALWELL: Sure. How did the FBI get the e-mail that was sent to your Gmail account, the spear-phishing email? How did they get that to make the attribution to Russia? Did you provide it or did someone on the --

MR. PODESTA: I don't know that they did. I think that was forensics that our campaign did.

MR. SWALWELL: Okay. Mr. Stone, had you ever met him before?

MR. PODESTA: No.

MR. SWALWELL: Had you ever worked against him in prior campaigns before?

MR. PODESTA: Not that I am aware of.

MR. SWALWELL: That is all.

MS. SPEIER: Thank you, again, Mr. Podesta. When you had that conversation with the FBI agent, what was the nature of that conversation?

MR. PODESTA: You know, he wanted to inform me something that I already knew, which was he called the -- if I remember correctly, he called the campaign. We were in St. Louis, because the it was the night of -- it was the day of the second debate. And I returned the call. And he really only gave me information that I was already aware of, because obviously it was all over the television, that -- again, if I remember the conversation right, I didn't take notes of the conversation, he said that my email had been hacked. I knew that. That they were being released. I knew that. And that he thought that a state actor was involved with the hacking. And that had been -- again, just not disclosed, but there had been reference to that in the October 7th letter that I believe all 17 intelligence agencies signed off on, but the letter that was released from Mr.

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Clapper and Mr. Johnson.

MS. SPEIER: Would you describe that as a CYA? Or was he really trying to impart some information? I mean, since it had been all over the news, it seems kind of like --

MR. PODESTA: I don't -- well, he didn't really try to get any information from me. I gave him my contacts so that he had them. And, you know, I told him that I would be willing to cooperate. If he had any follow up, he could follow up. So I think it was really just to establish a line of communications. But then that line of communications kind of went dead.

MS. SPEIER: Okay. So no further contact with the FBI?

MR. PODESTA: The FBI called my house subsequently. I was living in New York at the time. But called my house in D.C. My wife took the message. And I passed that along to my attorney, Mr. Elias. Mr. Elias returned the call, and that chain ended. I don't believe they ever made a call back.

MS. SPEIER: So when was that call?

MR. PODESTA: Probably a week after the first call, sometime in that period of time. So October 9th, it was probably sometime between the 9th and the 16th.

MS. SPEIER: So there was a call made. You passed it on to your attorney. Your attorney talked to someone in the FBI?

MR. PODESTA: My attorney returned the phone call and left a message for the person who had called my house, but didn't receive a return phone call.

MS. SPEIER: So there was no subsequent phone call. So we have no idea why they called you at that point?

MR. PODESTA: No. And my assumption is it had something do with this,

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but I don't really know that.

MS. SPEIER: So, did you notice anything -- once there was the dumping of the emails, was there any reduction in contributions being received in the campaign? Was there anything that you could attribute to it having an impact?

MR. PODESTA: Well, I think -- again, there is Russian activity we haven't really talked about. We have been talking about hacking. Russian activity extended beyond the hacking. There was a fair amount of fake news that was developed that was attributed to the emails, but it was really just fake.

MS. SPEIER: Can you give us some examples?

MR. PODESTA: I think the most famous example was the Pizzagate conspiracy, for which the person who believed what he was reading was just sentenced for having driven up to the restaurant and fired a gun in the restaurant. So that fake news was propagated, and then distributed with the aid of Russian actors, both by pushing those stories, that fake news, again, attributing it back to the fruits of the hack, even though there was no connection there. They make the stuff up, they -- you know, it appears -- sometimes it appears originally over there, sometimes it appears over here in some of the conspiracy websites, but they aided in the propagation of that email -- of that news. And I think it is fair to say that that was being pushed by actors who were associated with Russian active measures.

MS. SPEIER: You reference the sophistication of the dumps, that, you know, Russia wouldn't necessarily have a sense of rhythm of our campaign. So the dump that occurs on October 7th coincides with Jeh Johnson and Director Clapper announcing that the Russians were involved. It is the day before the actual debate, is it? Or 2 days?

MR. PODESTA: Two days.

MS. SPEIER: Two days before the second debate. It's also the same date as the Access Hollywood.

MR. PODESTA: Shortly thereafter.

MS. SPEIER: So did the dump come after the Access Hollywood or before?

MR. PODESTA: After.

MS. SPEIER: It came after.

MR. PODESTA: Just to note, it was a Friday night, which is not -- you wouldn't think would be the ideal time to start dumping and trying to create a new story, but obviously somebody, maybe it is Mr. Assange, very sophisticated, but somebody decided that on a Friday night there needed to be a different storyline than just Access Hollywood, I think.

MS. SPEIER: You also said that you stood up a full team to respond. How many people are we talking about?

MR. PODESTA: Probably about a dozen. A combination of researchers and communications people.

MS. SPEIER: And the budget for that would be what?

MR. PODESTA: Oh, \$100,000.

MS. SPEIER: During a good part of the campaign cycle, and you will remember this better than us probably, then-candidate Donald Trump kept talking about the rigged election, the rigged election. When did that start?

MR. PODESTA: I believe it started in the summer. I think it started around the time of the conventions.

MS. SPEIER: So if we --

MR. PODESTA: Perhaps right after the Democratic Convention. But I don't have a precise recollection of that.

MS. SPEIER: And Roger Stone was no longer the campaign consultant, but he -- so this was July -- but he is communicating his relationship to Guccifer, and also starting to suggest that you would be next on the docket. Okay. So in hindsight, what would you have done differently, if you could? Not in terms of the campaign as much as in terms of the hack or the Russian engagement and your response to it?

MR. PODESTA: Look, you know, I think that in hindsight, in my particular case, I would have certainly had a different retention policy of my personal email account.

MR. ROONEY: I think we all learned that.

MR. PODESTA: It wasn't until this incident that I even understood that deleted emails are kept by Google. But seriously, I think that you can only take so many, I think, technical measures to try to protect yourself. I thought I was relatively sophisticated about this. And I had, because of the nature of the work of the campaign, I had to have support with people who had access to my email account. Perhaps I would do that differently now. But I think the -- again, I come back to, the response needs to be also one of deterrence. And that can only really come from governmental actors.

MS. SPEIER: So finally, the fact that the FBI agent had very little to impart to you in terms of advice or -- do you believe that in a setting like that, that the expectations from the FBI should be different? More?

MR. PODESTA: You know, I answered that, I think, in my answer to Congresswoman Sewell's question. But I do think -- I do understand, I have

worked in the government, I have worked in the White House, I have worked with intelligence agencies, I understand that they have a difficult balance when they are getting information through classified channels about how much they can share with people who don't have clearances. And my clearances were expired. So I understand that.

On the other hand, I think they could be more forthcoming when they see the serious nature of the threat, and particularly, the threat to the fundamental democratic process of the United States. To be more -- rather than to give vague warnings that, you know, you might be a target, you should be serious about this stuff. I think to talk about the nature of what they know, I think it would be better practice. But those are judgment calls that the Bureau and through their processes they are going to have to make. They are the agency, I think more than even the Department of Homeland Security, that are going to -- with regard to these state actors, that are going to have the most information. And how much they are going to feel free to share, my sense is that even with respect to the state agencies they weren't particularly forthcoming about information that they had about the hacking that was going on against the Secretaries of State and the agencies that were charged with preparing voter files and the voting system.

MR. ROONEY: Mr. Podesta, we are running out of time. We are going to go to Dr. Wenstrup, Mr. Schiff, and then, if you need to take a break --

MR. PODESTA: I am fine.

MR. ROONEY: Then we are going to let staff ask you a few questions, and that should be good to go. So those buzzers were for us. Brad.

DR. WENSTRUP: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for being here, Mr. Podesta. You talked about a few things here. One, I feel fortunate in the



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military that we have to go through cyber awareness training all the time, because boy, I would have fallen for a lot of things, you know, throughout my lifetime if it weren't for that training. And so, I understand that. You talked about fake news, and I am trying to gauge a little bit about just how nefarious our adversaries are, and particularly Russia in this case. Were any of your emails, or the DNC emails that were dumped by WikiLeaks, false or fabricated in any way?

MR. PODESTA: I know that the original information that Mr. Assange put out was inaccurate. I didn't take a close enough look to confirm whether they were false or not false. There was I think with respect to the DNC, there are some indications that at least they had been manipulated.

DR. WENSTRUP: And did you point out any of those at any time? Did you want to say, hey, this is not true? These aren't our emails? I mean, I never heard that in this process. So I am just trying to get to --

MR. PODESTA: I noted that the original information that Mr. Assange put out was not true. I said it on television.

DR. WENSTRUP: Okay. And you discussed the damaging effects that the dumped emails had on the election. And you felt that they were fairly sophisticated with their timing in that regard?

MR. PODESTA: Yeah. I stand by my testimony.

DR. WENSTRUP: So what about the emails was damaging, especially if they weren't true? I mean, because you go --

MR. PODESTA: I go back over this ground. I think it was intended to take -- two things: one, intended to change the story line away from what it might have otherwise been, given the events of the day those emails were dumped; and I think it was intended to make us, instead of trying to get our message across

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about what Secretary Clinton wanted to do for the American public, we were instead dealing with insider campaign gossip. That is the nature of reporting today, that is the nature of campaign coverage. And I think that is an opportunity cost. And it kept the whole idea that our campaign was somehow tied up in emails alive for that period, that last several weeks of the campaign.

DR. WENSTRUP: I do think it is important for all of us, as we look towards the future, that we know they are going to engage again. They are good at this. They have been doing it for decades in any way that they can. I think it is important that we be able to say whether what they are putting out is factual or not. So what you are saying here today is the emails weren't factual.

MR. PODESTA: I said Mr. Assange put out information that was not factual.

DR. WENSTRUP: Were the emails factual?

MR. PODESTA: You have to -- you are going to, if you face it, Congressman, you will have to face the question of whether you want, on a daily basis, in a drip, drip, drip context, you want to confirm and be in the business of confirming the validity of the email or not. I mean, those are judgment calls that we were making. We were -- we made the decision that we would try to knock down fake stories, which we tried to do. And there was a lot of fake news that was floating around. And not engage in confirming the content of each email as it was being released.

DR. WENSTRUP: Line by line.

MR. PODESTA: Line by line.

DR. WENSTRUP: That was a decision that you made. Okay. That's what I am trying to get to. So just one last question. You know, in the whole

interest of finding out whether it was collusion or not, do you or Hillary Clinton that you know of, or the Clinton campaign, do you have any evidence, solid evidence of collusion between Russia and the Trump campaign?

MR. PODESTA: I have already, you know, discussed what I know. And, you know, again, I think that is the subject of Mr. Mueller's investigation, that is the subject of your investigation, that is the subject of the Senate Intelligence Committee's investigation. I am just trying to give you a sense of what I know.

DR. WENSTRUP: Sure. I thank you for volunteering to be here today. I yield back.

MR. SCHIFF: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to follow up really quickly on that. When you were mentioning that what Mr. Assange was saying wasn't true, are you referring to his characterization of the emails, or did you see indications that he was publishing, in fact, forgeries?

MR. PODESTA: No. I think that I was referring to his original statements about my -- about me that were contained in the original dump. They were false.

MR. SCHIFF: So his characterizations were false. But did you see evidence that they were also dumping forged documents?

MR. PODESTA: As I said, I think there was some indications in the DNC dump that they had been manipulated. But at that moment at the beginning of this period I didn't see any indication that those had been altered, at least in those first dumps.

MR. SCHIFF: You mentioned that the Russians were also involved in the propagation of fake news. And now that our President uses that term to apply to NBC and CBS, and whatever, it's been distorted out of recognition. But we are talking about false stories, completely fabricated stories. Did you see any

indication of -- this is analogous to what I was asking about earlier vis-à-vis the hacking and the dumping -- did you see any indications of a sophistication with respect to where they pushed the fake news?

MR. PODESTA: I think this is subsequent analysis, but, you know, it appears that there was some effort largely targeting Facebook advertising and Facebook algorithm manipulation, I guess you could say, to push that into the battleground States, in a way that indicated that it wasn't -- that the effort to push that in those channels wasn't at the same level in the rest of the country.

MR. SCHIFF: So your understanding --

MR. PODESTA: But, you know, I am no expert on that kind of stuff. I have read those analyses.

MR. SCHIFF: Who would you recommend within the campaign, and I think we will be interested in talking to Facebook about this as well, that could help us with the data analytics to determine what level of sophistication there was in the pushing of these fake stories by the Russian --

MR. PODESTA: The person who I think has the deepest -- that I have encountered -- that has the deepest understanding of the ecology, if you will, of the Russian tactics, both on the troll side, the use of human agents to push information, along with robotic information, is Clint Watts, former FBI agent, and a former member of the U.S. Army. I don't know if he has testified before this committee. He has testified to the Senate Intelligence Committee.

MR. SCHIFF: Not before our committee yet. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Podesta. I appreciate your testimony.

MR. ROONEY: Sir, we are going to have [REDACTED] take over and lead the staff questioning. If you want to take any kind of a break, that is up to you.

MR. PODESTA: I am good.

MR. ROONEY: [REDACTED]

EXAMINATION

BY [REDACTED]

Q Thanks for appearing. I don't have much more. When you are talking to me you are sort of down near the end. I just want to go through a couple things chronologically, sir. The hack of the DNC actually occurred in the summer of 2016. Is that correct?

A No. I don't believe that is correct. I think the original hacks -- I am not --

Q As to your knowledge?

A As to my -- I have no real independent knowledge other than what I have read in the newspaper. The original hacks I believe occurred in the fall of 2015, followed by hacks by a different organization associated with a different Russian intelligence agency that occurred in the spring of 2016.

Q Okay. And then there was a separate --

A The dump started in the summer of 2016.

Q Thank you. The dump started then. And then I had a couple questions about the Hillary for America PAC. Were you involved in setting that up?

MR. ELIAS: Hillary for America was the name of the campaign.

[REDACTED] Name of the campaign, but there was also a PAC. Did you have any affiliation with that?

MR. ELIAS: I don't believe there was. Hillary for America, Inc., was the name of the campaign.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Okay. There was also a PAC out there with that name. So I am just asking if you had any affiliation with that. Okay. Did you have any other email addresses that you utilized during the course of the campaign, say, a DNC email or DCCC email?

A No. I have a Georgetown email, which I don't use. I teach at the law school. But I don't use it and don't access it. And a Center for American Progress email that I believe might have been hacked, but I also don't access it.

Q To the best of your memory during the campaign, you would say you did most of the campaign business off the Gmail that we referred to?

A I used -- over the period of time shifted to the HillaryClinton.com.

Q Do you recall about when that shift occurred?

A I was probably using both accounts through the summer, and then more HillaryClinton.com. I changed my email address, but I continued to use Gmail.

Q And are you aware, sir, if any of your emails or content from the HillaryClinton.com address were ever revealed to the public?

A They were not revealed to the public. I don't believe they were hacked.

Q And to the best of your knowledge, none of that information was hacked?

A To the best of my knowledge, they were not hacked.

[REDACTED] Thank you, sir.

BY [REDACTED]

Q Thanks for being here today. In response to some earlier questions

from Dr. Wenstrup and Ranking Member Schiff, you referenced incorrect information or false characterizations that were put out by Mr. Assange in connection with the dumping of your emails. Can you just characterize for us what was the nature of the incorrect information?

A He affiliated me with my brother's firm as being a member of that firm at that time.

Q And is that the only characterization --

A I have to go back and check. But he basically was -- and go back and look at his tweet. But that particularly sticks in my mind.

Q But off the top of your head, that is the only false information that you remember at this time?

A I would have to go back and check.

Q And you are not -- just to confirm your earlier testimony, you are not aware of any information within the dumped emails themselves that was either false or manipulated?

A That is correct.

Q So given that these were your emails over many years, I can only imagine the discomfort of seeing them dripped out little by little. And in retrospect, to the extent you reviewed them, was there anything notable that was either omitted or any distinct pattern you noticed in the way they that were dumped?

A I have to say that, you know, I was dealing with this real time, and I have not gone back and done an analysis of that. Maybe that is for another book. But so I was dealing with it more on a daily basis.

Q In December of 2016, The New York Times published an extensive

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autopsy of the hacking, which included the hacking of your emails. According to that story, the spear-phishing email was sent to your account on March 19th of 2016 in the guise of a direction to change your password. Is that reporting correct, to the best of your knowledge?

A That is the forensic reproduction, I think, that the campaign did of what happened. I wasn't aware of it at the time, obviously -- or maybe not so obviously, but I wasn't aware of it at the time.

Q Two things to follow up there. Can you describe this forensic reproduction that took place?

A Our chief of security went back and tried to understand or look at what point of -- during the -- in this context, what point of vulnerability they may have found, and found this traffic that I described.

Q Now, following this change of password email, there was an email, again according to New York Times reporting, sent from a Charles Delavan saying "This is a legitimate email. John needs to change his password immediately." Were you a recipient of that email?

A No. I don't believe I was. At a minimum, I don't remember receiving it.

Q Right. Right. So to your knowledge or recollection, who actually changed your password?

A Malia Fisher, who was my assistant.

Q And was she affiliated with the campaign or --

A Yes.

Q Okay. And who is Mr. Delavan?

A He was someone who worked on the technology team inside the

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campaign.

Q Now, he said that, according to this New York Times story, he had mistyped and meant to say, this is an illegitimate email, and that he had -- an error that he said that has plagued him every since. But I am curious, if he thought the email was illegitimate, why the next sentence would then say "change your password," which is exactly what the spear phishing was trying to get you to do. Can you shed any insight into that matter?

A No.

Q So in summary then, the actual -- to the extent experts or a forensic analysis has established this March 19 email and the subsequent change of your password as sort of how your email was hacked, you weren't actually involved firsthand in those events?

A That is correct.

Q And so you had referenced earlier that you had some suspicion that your email might have been hacked prior to the beginning of the dumping. Is there a particular -- and you sort of described some of the context of that. Is there a particular moment that you can pinpoint as to when you developed that suspicion?

A As I said, I think it was in early July in the wake of the DCLeaks original dump of the DNC files. But included in those were some documents, a range of documents, some of which were -- that were extant in my Gmail account that didn't look like they belonged at the DNC. And I think the same thing was true with Ambassador Marshall.

Q Earlier, if I understood your testimony correctly, you said that to your knowledge, Secretary Clinton was not briefed by the U.S. Government on Russian

hacking during the campaign. Is that correct?

A I am unaware of it if she was.

Q And you are also, I assume, aware that after the election, President Obama ordered an Intelligence Community analysis of the hacking?

A I am.

Q And that the results of that were published in unclassified form in January of 2017?

A I am aware of that, yeah.

Q And are you aware as to whether Secretary Clinton was ever briefed on the findings of that analysis prior to its public release?

A I have no knowledge of that. I don't know.

Q So one of the lines in the unclassified analysis is that Putin most likely wanted to discredit Secretary Clinton because he has publicly blamed her since 2011 for inciting mass protests against his regime in late 2011 and early 2012, and because he holds a grudge for comments he almost certainly saw as disparaging him. Have you happened to read that or do you recall that from the assessment?

A I do recall that, yeah.

Q Prior to that, in December of 2016, this is according to a New York Times article, and I will quote, "Speaking to a group of donors in Manhattan, Ms. Clinton said that Mr. Putin, the Russian President, had never forgiven her for the accusations she made in 2011 when she was Secretary of State that the parliamentary elections his country held were rigged. Putin blamed outrage of his own people, and that is the direct line between what he said back then and what he did in this election." Her comments, as you will note, were pretty similar to the analysis contained in the assessment, which could of course be coincidence. But

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do you have any reason to believe that that assessment, either in unclassified or classified form, was shared with Hillary Clinton prior to December 16th?

A I have no knowledge of that.

Q But you would agree that the assessment that was ultimately posted in the report and the assessment that she provided to donors in mid-December were pretty similar?

A There is a lot of reporting about that also over that period of time, about what the -- what ultimately became the official assessment was being reported on. So I don't know. But I don't know the source of whatever information she had other than the firsthand knowledge of what Mr. Putin and her relationship were, because obviously subsequent to Putin's election she dealt with him as Secretary of State.

Q Understood. I only have a couple minutes left, so just one last topic. Much has been made of the connections between the Trump campaign and Russian officials. Obviously, the Clinton campaign was the other major campaign. And we would really like to get a baseline for comparative purposes. Ambassador Kislyak, the Russian ambassador to the U.S., has been in the news. Have you ever met Ambassador Kislyak?

A Not to the best of my knowledge. You know, I don't think so.

Q And do you recall having any interactions with Russian Government -- personal interactions with Russian Government officials during the campaign?

A No. No, I did not have any personal interactions with Russian Government officials.

Q There has been some reporting about an event attended by foreign

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ambassadors, including I believe Ambassador Kislyak, at the Republican National Convention. Was there a similar or analogous event at the Democrat National Convention to host foreign dignitaries and ambassadors?

A NDI, the National Democratic Institute, and RNI, does the same thing at the Republican convention, brings foreign guests, foreign leaders, I assume that includes ambassadors to the convention. There is programming for them.

Q And that happened at the 2016 Democrat convention?

A I have no knowledge of that, but I assume so.

Q So it wasn't something that you were involved in?

A No.

Q But it is fairly typical you would say for either directly sponsored by the conventions or on the sidelines of the convention for there to be events for foreign dignitaries?

A Foreign dignitaries, yes.

Q And are you aware that any Russian officials participated in those events either at the 2016 Democrat National Convention or previous Democrat National Conventions?

A I have no knowledge of that, so no, I am not aware of any.

Q Final question. You referred earlier to, in addition to the hacking, fake news, and said that it was your belief or understanding that that was, I believe the quote was, pushed by the Russians. Certainly there has been reporting to that effect in the press. What is the basis for your assessment or the evidence you relied on to connect fake news stories to the efforts of the Russian Government?

A The analytics that have been publicly disclosed by various sources. And I make particular reference to the work that Mr. Watts has done.

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Q But you aren't -- or are you privy to any sort of private analytics or analysis that was done by the Clinton campaign?

A There was certainly analysis of what was moving in the social media channels. I think the deepened connection to the Russian influence in that I learned subsequent to that, subsequent to the campaign.

██████████ Thanks. My time is up.

EXAMINATION

BY ██████████

Q Mr. Podesta, we will make this really short. I think we have been sitting here for almost 2 hours. Sir, we really appreciate your indulgence today, and I thank you very much for answering our questions. This is a bipartisan investigation. We are looking into looking into four key questions, as approved by the chairman and ranking member on March 1st, 2017. The first area we are looking into is what Russian cyber activity and other active measures were directed against the United States and its allies. The second area we are looking into is did the Russian active measures include links between Russia and individuals associated with political campaigns or any U.S. persons. The third area we are looking into is what the U.S. Government response to these Russian active measures was and what do we need to do to protect ourselves and our allies in the future? And finally, we are looking at what possible leaks of classified information took place related to the Intelligence Community assessment of these matters. And, of course, you were personally a victim of Russia's information campaign. And so you have important direct knowledge of what happened. So we appreciate you sharing that information. And it is also helpful that you are familiar with your leadership position within the Democratic party. I have just two

quick questions, and I will see if my colleague has anything.

You mentioned earlier in this discussion that some of the lower level staff also had their emails hacked. Were those emails released on WikiLeaks?

A They were released. I don't know whether it was DCLeaks or WikiLeaks. I just don't remember. I probably at one point knew that, but I don't remember.

Q Sir, my colleague asked you about the Democratic National Convention, and whether the DNC held a similar event for ambassadors and diplomats, and you confirmed that the DNC also held a similar event. Is that right?

A I don't know that it was a similar event. NDI runs a program at the convention. They invite foreign political leaders. I assume that includes some ambassadors. I don't really know what the collection of people are. And they have -- they get some access to the convention hall, they have speakers. You know, it is a courtesy that NDI extends to foreign officials.

Q Do you happen to know if Mr. Kislyak attended that event?

A I do not know.

BY [REDACTED]

Q And did you -- were senior members of your campaign committee with these foreign guests as part of this NDI? Is that part of it, to meet the campaign?

A Truthfully, I think that was a low priority for the senior people in the campaign. But whether any of them, you know, made appearances -- like I say, they have, you know, a regular program of activities and speeches by leaders so that foreign political figures and other foreign leaders can see the democracy in action. But it was not a high priority for the senior members of our campaign.

We had other things to worry about then to participate in that.

Q And I just have one last question. As you had discussed, and has been discussed in the IC assessment, the breadth, the intensity, the scope of this Russian influence campaign in its entirety was unprecedented.

So I am going to ask one question, and would like to know whether your answer relates to what you thought at the time or in hindsight. Either is useful, because it would be natural not to notice it. I think now, as you notice, the French are more cognizant, everybody now, the awareness of everyone now is much more intense. But there were many active measures, as you noted, beyond hacking. There was the media. And even that takes several forms.

There are also the Russians, as you know, will try to put people in contact, obtain access to campaigns, et cetera. Either at the time or now, can you think of any other event that might have seemed strange at the time but you didn't know, or maybe makes more sense now that might have fit into that category?

A The only -- I have already mentioned the only thing that really sticks out in my mind, which was changing the Republican platform with respect to Ukraine.

Q So even at the time that was -- that really sticks?

A Well, again, you know, this is public, we criticized the candidate Trump for his denigration of NATO, for his association with foreign policy that was more -- seemed more in line with what President Putin was pursuing than the bipartisan consensus that occurred in the U.S. But that particular change of the platform language seemed to come out of nowhere. We made note of it in the things that -- in the communications that we were putting out from the campaign.

Q And when you said you made note of it, after that time, was there

other Russia-friendly rhetoric or events or anything coming out of the Trump campaign that struck you as a pattern, or was that a one off in your --

A No, I think that was continuous. And lasted into the administration.

██████████ I will end it there.

██████████ Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 4:25 p.m., the interview was concluded]