

Does anyone still believe the story that Donald Trump colluded with Vladimir Putin to win the 2016 presidential election? If so, special counsel John Durham's indictment of Igor Danchenko should put their minds at rest.

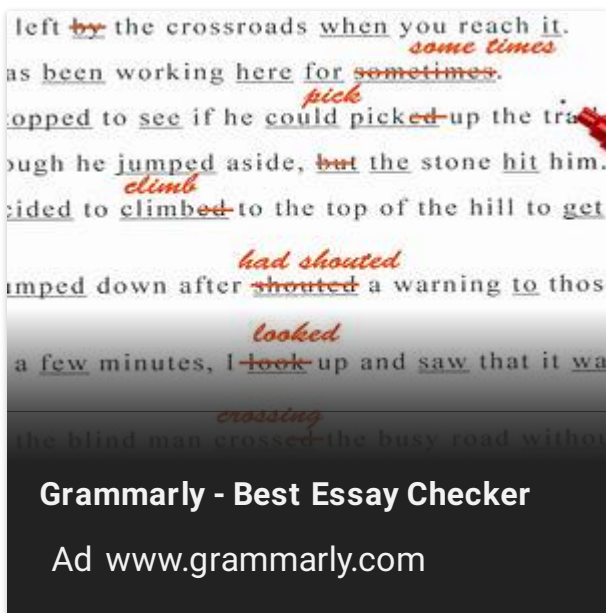
The 39-page document is rich with detail on the origins, use and abuse of the Russian collusion story as a means to undermine the 2016 Trump campaign.

Danchenko is identified as the person who collected information "that ultimately **formed the core of the allegations**" in the infamous dossier by Christopher Steele. Danchenko was indicted on lying to the FBI in 2017 about who he was working with and where his information came from.

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Source linked to Hillary Clinton

The indictment **exposes former Hillary Clinton aide Charles Dolan**, identified only as "PR Executive-1," as an important Danchenko source. Dolan allegedly fed Danchenko information he claimed he had obtained when he "**had a drink with a GOP friend**," but later admitted he had fabricated the story. The indictment also shows that PR Executive-1 was an important source for reporting by The Washington Post and the Times of London when the Steele dossier scandal broke in January 2017.



The Danchenko indictment is particularly telling in detailing how the fake story was inserted into the political ecosystem, starting with Dolan and perhaps others. Danchenko allegedly fed the falsehoods to Steele, a British former intelligence operative hired by Fusion GPS to conduct the research.

Fusion GPS had been retained by Clinton campaign lawyer Marc Elias, whom law professor Johnathan Turley has called a "**potential apex target**" of the **Durham probe**. Clinton's government slipped

sympathetic operatives in the Justice Department, who used it to mount a spying campaign

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on Trump. And the American news media spread the rumors, which undermined the Trump presidency.

While the Danchenko indictment offers many new details on what was sold as a "[well-developed conspiracy of cooperation](#)" between the Trump campaign and Russia, ample evidence of the falsehood of this notion has been available for years.

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As early as October 2017, The Post reported that the "Hillary Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee helped fund research that resulted in a now-famous (Steele) dossier [containing allegations about President Trump's connections to Russia](#) and possible coordination between his campaign and the Kremlin."

As was later revealed, the dossier became the [basis for Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act warrants](#) against Trump aide Carter Page, and unprecedented FBI surveillance on the Trump campaign before the election.

Accusations were a political dirty trick

By 2017, it was clear that "Russian collusion" was just a political dirty trick. But the narrative was firmly embedded in the liberal mind, and the wheels of the Washington investigative apparatus were turning, so the false story lived on.

Its legitimacy was bolstered in 2018 by [Pulitzer Prizes awarded to The New York Times and The Washington Post](#) for "deeply sourced, relentlessly reported coverage" of "Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election and its connections to the Trump campaign, the President-elect's transition team and his eventual administration."

Special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation was supposed to have been the grand reckoning for Trump, the comprehensive exposure of the colluders and how they undermined American democracy. Mueller's [2019 report](#) was long on [how Moscow attempted to interfere](#) in the 2016 election. But on the matter of collusion with the Trump campaign, Mueller came up empty, and for good reason. The collusion never existed.

Now the Durham investigation is laying bare the extent of the campaign and thwart his presidency. The probe has so far led [people](#) accused of spreading the false Russia conspiracy theory.

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This is good news, and hopefully more indictments will follow. It is important to understand how operatives connected to the Hillary Clinton campaign conspired to harness the political system to undermine American democracy and weaken a legitimately elected president.

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This article originally appeared on USA TODAY: [No collusion: How Americans were fed a false tale about Donald Trump's 2016 campaign](#)

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