



Response to DNI Gabbard's Claims on Russian Election Interference in 2016

In a transparent effort to distract from bipartisan criticism of the Trump Administration's refusal to release the Jeffrey Epstein files that it promised months ago, Director Gabbard is seeking to cast doubt on the conclusions reached by the 2017 Intelligence Community Assessment (ICA) entitled "Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections." As part of her effort to rewrite history, she has accused President Obama and other former officials of engaging in a conspiracy to commit treason—a claim as dangerous as it is baseless.

In the 2017 ICA, the Intelligence Community (IC) assessed that:

“Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US presidential election, the consistent goals of which were to undermine public faith in the US democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency. We further assess Putin and the Russian Government developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump.”

This assessment has probably been picked apart more than any other product in the IC's history, and eight years later, it remains an accurate description backed by a wealth of both classified intelligence and unclassified information. No fewer than four previous investigations reaffirmed this conclusion, including a 2020 bipartisan report issued by the Republican-controlled Senate Intelligence Committee chaired by then-Senator Marco Rubio.

Contrary to the desperate claims of Director Gabbard, what occurred is not reasonably in dispute. During the 2016 election, the Russian government and Russian-linked actors undertook a range of influence activities, including the hacking and leaking of emails from Democratic institutions and leaders, a covert social media influence campaign, and overt messaging through state media. Malign efforts by a foreign government to influence our democratic process should be unacceptable to any patriotic American, regardless of the nation perpetrating it and regardless of which party it may help or hurt.

Director Gabbard is attempting to rewrite history to please Donald Trump, with no apparent concern for the profound damage she is doing to our country. She is not just blatantly misrepresenting the facts; she is politicizing intelligence, eroding trust in the IC, and undermining America's national security. The result is an invitation to foreign adversaries to interfere in future elections with impunity.

Claim: The intelligence record was manipulated regarding Putin's support for Trump during the 2016 election.

Truth: Putin clearly favored Donald Trump in the 2016 election. The 2017 ICA, reaffirmed by multiple bipartisan investigations, concluded that Putin ordered a coordinated influence campaign to

undermine Hillary Clinton and boost Donald Trump. This finding has stood the test of time and scrutiny, including a 2021 IC assessment that found Putin also sought to support Trump in the 2020 election. Stepping back, Putin's preference was evident not only in the intelligence record, but completely logical given Trump's repeated public praise of Putin, his public invitation for Russia to target Clinton's emails, his hostility toward NATO, his lack of support for Ukraine, and his fondness for fellow authoritarians.

Claim: *Obama Administration leadership intentionally pushed the IC to manipulate prior assessments about Russian intent and capability to "hack" the election.*

Truth: **The Intelligence Community and the broader Obama Administration consistently stated, both publicly and in classified reporting, that there was no evidence that Russia or any other hostile actor directly impacted or altered vote counts in the 2016 election.** What did become clear through the IC's coverage of Russian election meddling was Moscow's concerted campaign to undermine Clinton's candidacy, most notably through the hacking of email accounts associated with the Democratic party and Clinton campaign officials, and to use covert social media activities to sow chaos and mistrust in the election process.

A joint statement released in October 2016 by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) and DHS stated it would be "extremely difficult for someone, including a nation-state actor, to alter actual ballot counts or election results by cyber attack or intrusion." This finding was echoed in the ICA and in a statement released by ODNI in January 2017, which observed: "DHS assesses that the types of systems the Russian actors targeted or compromised were not involved in vote tallying."

Claim: *The allegations within the Steele Dossier contributed to the conclusions of the ICA.*

Truth: **Multiple independent reviews have confirmed that the Steele Dossier played no role in the ICA's conclusions.** This finding was corroborated most recently by the CIA's Tradecraft Review, released in June 2025. While critical of aspects of the ICA process, the Review found that: "*The ICA also demonstrated strong adherence to tradecraft standards through frequent use of attributive language, explicit identification of intelligence gaps, and clear statements of confidence levels. This level of analytic rigor exceeded that of most IC assessments.*"

The bipartisan Senate Intelligence Committee investigation also found that the Steele Dossier was not part of the ICA team's analytic process because it was still under investigation at the time the ICA was published. The only evidence that Director Gabbard offers to refute this consensus is a secondhand account of a statement by an IC officer who was not involved in the 2016 ICA production.

Claim: *President Obama and Senior IC officials committed crimes.*

Truth: **This claim is baseless and dangerous. Tellingly, Gabbard does not specify what crimes she believes were committed.** In public statements, she has absurdly suggested that officials committed "treason," a crime defined as levying war against the United States. The actions of the IC and DOJ in this period were investigated for more than four years by Special Counsel John Durham, culminating in a report that found no misconduct, let alone criminal conduct, on the part of senior officials.