

Source for Dossier Tying Trump 2016 to Russia Arrested

By [AFP](#)

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Igor Danchenko. [Igor Danchenko / Facebook](#)

A Russia expert who was a key source for the explosive dossier by former British spy Christopher Steele that purportedly documented ties between Donald Trump's 2016 election campaign and Moscow was arrested Thursday, the U.S. Justice Department said.

Igor Danchenko, a consultant and former researcher in Russian affairs at the Brookings Institution, was indicted for lying to FBI investigators in early 2017 about his own sources for the dossier.

The Steele dossier, a compendium of raw intelligence reports commissioned by Democratic Party consultants, sparked strong concerns that Trump could be beholden to Moscow.

Much of what it suggested has never been proven, and some allegations have been shown false.

Danchenko, a Russian national, was arrested as part of the investigation by special counsel John Durham examining the foundations for the Justice Department's own 2016–2017 probe into Trump's ties to Russia.

Trump, who may run again for president in 2024, has repeatedly branded the Russia investigation a political "witch hunt" and alleged that the Steele dossier was part of a "Deep State" effort to smear him.

It included the unproven allegation that Moscow has damning videotapes of Trump's sexual misbehavior during a 2013 trip to Moscow.

Investigating the investigators

U.S. intelligence had already concluded at the end of 2016, without use of Steele's report, that Moscow tried to help Trump win election.

In May 2017 the original FBI Russia investigation was placed in the hands of special counsel Robert Mueller.

Mueller's final report in March 2019 — which also did not rely on the dossier — showed multiple instances of possible cooperation between the campaign and Russia, but found no conspiracy. And it documented instances of alleged obstruction by Trump.

But then-attorney general Bill Barr, a Trump ally, quickly declared Mueller found no criminal wrongdoing and declined to take action.

Weeks later he appointed Durham, a veteran federal prosecutor, to investigate those behind the Russia investigation, implying that the original FBI probe was politically motivated to harm Trump.

One year ago, just ahead of Trump's loss to Democrat Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election, Barr insulated Durham by naming him an independent special prosecutor to continue his work.

Durham has yet to show any evidence that the original Russia probe was politically motivated.

The indictment of Danchenko alleges that he masked his sources from FBI investigators, even as some of his information was used by the bureau to seek permits to surveil a Trump campaign official.

Of the two others charged by Durham, one pleaded guilty to altering an official email that was used to justify FBI surveillance of a Trump campaign advisor, and the other was charged with lying to investigators on a matter only tangentially related to the Russia probe.

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