

**Breaking Down the Mueller Report
Barbara Ledeen's Search for Clinton's Emails**
([Mueller Report Pages 62-65, 168-173](#))

Toplines

- During the 2016 election and while serving as a Senate Judiciary Committee staffer, Barbara Ledeen was tasked by Michael Flynn, who was tasked by Trump, to try to obtain Hillary Clinton's personal emails. She coordinated with longtime GOP operatives Peter Smith and Erik Prince.
- Ledeen's activities included liaising with intelligence sources and obtaining materials from the "dark web".
- Ledeen remains a staffer on the Senate Judiciary Committee, which has oversight over aspects of the Mueller investigation.

Key Facts from the Report

- Ledeen has been a Senate staffer since [at least](#) 2002 and [worked](#) for Senator [Grassley](#) on the Senate Judiciary Committee. She is still employed by the committee.
- Ledeen had been searching for emails from Clinton as early as December 2015, when she emailed a detailed proposal about her plan to find them to Peter Smith, who the Mueller report describes as "an investment advisor who was active in Republican politics."
- In July 2016, Trump [asked](#) Russia to "find the 30,000 emails that are missing." He also passed this request to Michael Flynn, who in turn reached out to both Smith and Ledeen.
- Smith and Ledeen resumed contact about the search for Clinton's emails in September 2016, and Ledeen "claimed to have obtained a trove of emails [...] that purported to be the deleted Clinton emails."
 - The Mueller report states that "Ledeen wanted to authenticate the emails and solicited contributions to fund that effort." This led Ledeen to contact Erik Prince, who would later [meet](#) with a high-ranking Putin ally during the transition.
 - Prince "provided funding to hire a tech advisor to ascertain the authenticity of the emails. According to Prince, the tech advisor determined that the emails were not authentic."
- Smith went as far as to create a company and raise money towards the effort. He claimed to others "that he was in contact with hackers with 'ties and affiliations to Russia' who had access to the emails, and that his efforts were coordinated with the Trump Campaign."
- Ledeen's husband, Michael Ledeen, was also linked to the Trump team's Russian contacts and to Michael Flynn. Michael Ledeen served as "a Transition Team member who advised on foreign policy and national security matters."
 - On December 29, 2016, Flynn was coordinating with then-Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak about US sanctions on Russia. The Mueller report states that Flynn "chose not to communicate with Kislyak about the sanctions until he had heard from the team at Mar-a-Lago," and that "he first spoke with Michael Ledeen [...] for 20 minutes."

Overview

On July 27, 2016, [Trump](#) said "Russia, if you're listening, I hope you're able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing," in reference to Hillary Clinton's email client. He made this request privately as well, tasking

“individuals affiliated with his Campaign” to find the emails. Michael Flynn stated that “Trump made this request repeatedly, and Flynn subsequently contacted multiple people in an effort to obtain the emails.”

According to the report, within approximately five hours of Trump's statement, hackers with Russia's military intelligence agency GRU targeted Clinton's personal office for the first time.

Meanwhile, Flynn tasked two individuals to find the emails: Peter Smith and Barbara Ledeen. Smith and Ledeen had been in touch about the emails in December 2015, prior to Flynn's request, when Ledeen emailed Smith a 25-page proposal about how to obtain the emails using open-source analysis and by “checking with certain intelligence sources that have access through liaison work with various foreign services.” Smith told Ledeen that he would not be participating in her plan.

Smith and Ledeen resumed contact about the emails in September 2016, and Ledeen “claimed to have obtained a trove of emails (from what she described as the ‘dark web’) that purported to be the deleted Clinton emails.” Ledeen obtained funding from Erik Prince to attempt to authenticate the emails, although the “tech advisor” hired by Prince “determined that the emails were not authentic.”

Smith also launched his own operation to find the emails, and the Mueller report notes “he created a company, raised tens of thousands of dollars, and recruited security experts and business associates.” Smith coordinated his efforts with the Trump campaign, communicating with then-co-chairman Sam Clovis and Flynn about his search. Smith claimed to be “in contact with hackers with ‘ties and affiliations to Russia’ who had access to the emails, although the investigation “did not identify evidence that any such meetings occurred” and “did not establish that Smith was in contact with Russian hackers.”

The Mueller report also says that there were questions about whether Smith had access to files “that had been downloaded from WikiLeaks” prior to their release, but ultimately noted that “the investigation did not otherwise identify evidence that Smith obtained the files before their release by WikiLeaks.” Smith died in May 2017.

Ledeen's husband is Michael Ledeen, who served as “a Transition Team member who advised on foreign policy and national security matters.” Michael Ledeen was consulted by Flynn at a crucial moment during the transition. On December 29, 2016, Flynn was [coordinating](#) with then-Russian ambassador Kislyak about US sanctions on Russia. The Mueller report states that Flynn “chose not to communicate with Kislyak about the sanctions until he had heard from the team at Mar-a-Lago,” and that “he first spoke with Michael Ledeen [...] for 20 minutes.”

Remaining Questions

- Did Ledeen contact any Russia-linked individuals in her attempts to locate the emails?
- Was Smith in contact with Russian hackers, or anyone else linked to Russia, in his search?
- Who else did Flynn, or other Trump campaign staffers, ask to locate the emails? Who did they discuss these efforts with?
- Who else on the Trump campaign knew that Ledeen and Smith were trying to locate the emails?
- Did Smith or Ledeen contact or coordinate with WikiLeaks at any point during the campaign?
- Did Ledeen recuse herself from Senate Judiciary work on the Mueller probe?