

The Weekly Standards Ties to Media Assassins At Fusion GPS

By [Julie Kelly](#) |

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In his online [appeal](#) for money after being fired this week, disgraced former FBI agent Peter Strzok credited an unlikely source to vouch for his victim status: *The Weekly Standard*.

At one time a leading conservative magazine, the *Standard* declared last month that Strzok's plight was merely an "overwrought tale of bias" and the case against him is "just sound and fury." The [article](#) brushed off Strzok's actions as "several bad judgment calls" and blasted Congressional Republicans for continuing a criminal investigation into the now-unemployed G-man.

Strzok is following only 32 people on his newly-verified Twitter account. Bill Kristol, the editor-at-large of the *Standard*, is one of them.

So, what's with the fanboying between the *Standard*—an allegedly serious publication dedicated to advancing conservative principles—and a corrupt government bureaucrat who embodies

everything the conservative movement fought against for decades?

I found an [article](#) in the *Standard* archives this week that might explain why. On July 24, 2016, just days before Strzok helped [launch](#) a counterintelligence probe into the Trump campaign, Kristol gave Strzok and the Obama Justice Department a big assist from the anti-Trump Right by posting a flawed and questionably-sourced article. “Putin’s Party” is compelling evidence that Kristol and the *Standard* were far from mere sideline observers as the Trump-Russia collusion scam took shape in the summer of 2016.

At the very least, the timing of the article suggests there was careful coordination between the central players—including the Hillary Clinton campaign—and Bill Kristol to derail Trump’s candidacy just weeks before the election. But the article’s content also serves to raise alarming questions about the [claims](#) by many Republicans that “conservatives” had no knowledge of or involvement with the Christopher Steele dossier.

Let’s back up a bit. On the morning that Kristol’s piece posted, the Trump-Russian election collusion story was in its embryonic stage—nearly all American voters that summer remained blissfully unaware of the details in this preposterous story—but secretly it was being peddled to the media by Fusion GPS, a political opposition research firm [hired](#) by the Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee to dig up Russian-related dirt on Donald Trump. Talking points produced by Glenn Simpson, the head of Fusion, and contained in the Steele dossier, were making the rounds in the D.C.-NYC media clique during July 2016. (At the same time, Steele was working [with](#) the FBI and alerting the agency to his dubious findings about the Trump campaign.)

Kristol’s article hits on every single one of the Simpson-Steele talking points: Trump forced the GOP to water-down language on the Ukraine in the party’s platform (it [didn’t](#) happen); the Russians were behind Wikileaks’ release of the DNC’s hacked emails (unproven); Trump encouraged foreign powers to interfere in the election (he didn’t); and Trump would not honor U.S. commitments to NATO (an overblown assessment of Trump’s NATO criticism nearly all the Republican candidates made). He listed a handful of unknown Trump campaign associates who would soon become household names, including campaign manager Paul Manafort; national security advisor, Lt. General Michael Flynn; and foreign policy aide Carter Page. (Strzok and the FBI formally opened their investigation into the three men—and campaign aide George Papadopoulos—on July 31, 2016.)

The content of Kristol’s piece closely mirrored reporting by other news outlets at the same time. (Lee Smith [wrote](#) about how the Fusion-planted media echo chamber evolved before the election.) But despite the

flimsiness of the accusations, Kristol took his advocacy a step further.

These indications provide sufficient grounds for Trump's links to Putin to be further investigated. Politicians who are currently supporting Trump should withdraw their unconditional support. We don't know how direct and close a financial relationship Trump and Manafort have with the Putin regime. If Trump and Manafort don't act to allay these concerns by releasing their tax returns (or in other ways), wouldn't it be advisable for a Republican member of Congress to lead an urgent investigation into whether Putin is interfering in the current American election? Trump and Manafort may be Putin's chumps. Will other Republicans sit by as the whole Republican party becomes Putin's party?

A few hours after the *Standard* piece went online, Clinton campaign manager Robby Mook reinforced Kristol's message in an [interview](#) on CNN. Desperate to change the subject from DNC chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz's pending resignation, Mook also claimed the Russians were behind the DNC's computer hack because Putin wanted Trump to win. There were other similarities to Kristol's article. "Trump and his allies made changes to the Republican platform to make it more pro-Russian," Mook told Jake Tapper. "And we saw him talking about how NATO shouldn't intervene to defend our Eastern European allies if they are attacked by Russia. So, I think, when you put all this together, it's a disturbing picture."

The next day, Carter Page [received](#) his first text from a reporter and former *Wall Street Journal* colleague of Simpson's, asking him about his ties to Russia and mentioning dossier-sourced specifics. White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest fielded his first (planted) [question](#) during the daily press briefing by an AP reporter, who oddly asked whether the DNC hack was an attempt to influence the election in favor of Donald Trump.

Coincidence? Not a chance.

Kristol would take to Twitter dozens of [times](#) before the election to promote the Trump-Russia collusion fantasy, even referring to the GOP as "the Putin Party." Kristol's handpicked candidate to challenge Trump, Evan McMullin, also [pushed](#) the Trump-Russia narrative. (On the other hand, despite Fusion and Glenn Simpson being covered in the conservative media for more than a year, Kristol has [zero](#) tweets about the firm.)

It might be easy to dismiss all of this as mere happenstance, the rantings of a fierce Trump foe determined to do whatever he could to stop Trump from winning. But there is an important sidebar to consider: The *Washington Free Beacon* [admitted](#) last year that they retained Fusion from late 2015 until April 2016 to gather opposition research on Republican primary candidates. The website is run by Kristol's son-in-law, Matthew Continetti. The *Beacon* posted

numerous negative stories about the Trump campaign in 2016, including hit pieces on Carter Page in [March](#) and [July](#).

The *Beacon's* story keeps changing, however. At first, Continetti [admitted](#) that the *Beacon* “retained Fusion GPS to provide research on multiple candidates in the Republican presidential primary.” Days later, Continetti explained why his website failed to mention its relationship with Fusion in several related articles prior to October 2017. After some blather about aggregated articles, Continetti [vowed](#) that future articles “will mention its history” with Fusion.

And they did. A few days after that, the *Beacon* posted an article with this disclaimer: “The *Washington Free Beacon* was once a client of Fusion GPS. That relationship ended in January 2017.”

Say what? Something is not adding up here; in fact, it stinks.

We are expected to believe that Bill Kristol’s son-in-law paid Fusion throughout the 2016 presidential campaign cycle but Simpson doesn’t pitch one dossier-related story to either one? Kristol just comes up with the very same flimsy talking points that Simpson and Steele are peddling—at the exact same time—and it’s pure coincidence? Kristol just happens to call for an investigation one week before the FBI takes the outrageous and unprecedented step of probing private citizens working on an opposing presidential campaign? Kristol and Robby Mook just strangely regurgitate the identical Trump-Russia plotline—on the same morning?

Since the election, Kristol and the *Standard* have ignored major developments in Spycgate while shamefully working with Democratic operatives to smear lawmakers such as Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Calif), chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, who are trying to get to the bottom of the scandal. Kristol has been in the forefront of keeping Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation working in perpetuity.

And the *Standard* has yet to [report](#) on Strzok getting fired. (Nor has Kristol [tweeted](#) about Strzok.)

Unfortunately, there are still some conservatives who trust Kristol and the *Standard* fairly to report on the Trump presidency and Republican Congress. It’s important that the public fully understands what role Kristol and his publication played—and continue to play—in fueling the biggest political corruption scandal in American history.

Kristol asks a lot of questions on Twitter. It’s time for him to answer some now.