

Key Official Who Was Investigating Trump's Ties to Russia Departing DOJ



Summary: The Department of Justice official Mary McCord will leave her position in May.

How much influence did Vladimir Putin have on the 2016 U.S. election? According to *Reuters*, the Russian president devised an elaborate plan to sway the American public to vote for Donald Trump, and U.S. intelligence agencies are currently investigating this shocking claim.

Reuters reported that the Russian government created a think tank to devise a plan to undermine American voters' faith in the electoral system and to swing the 2016 election in Republican candidate and now 45th president Donald Trump's favor.

Seven U.S. officials told *Reuters* that they obtained two confidential documents from the Putin-controlled think tank. Those documents outlined Russia's plan to interfere with the election, and they were prepared by the Moscow-based Russian Institute for Strategic Studies.

The first document recommended that Russia start a campaign on social media and Russian-funded American news outlets to press for a candidate who would be more willing to work with Russia than Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama.

The second document warned that Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton was likely to win the election, so it stated that it would be better to end the pro-Trump messaging and instead focus on anti-Clinton propaganda. The officials who spoke to *Reuters* said that these documents are proof of Russia's "fake news" campaign and the cyber attacks that happened to Clinton's campaign group.

The investigation is being led by Mary McCord, acting assistant attorney general of the Department of Justice, and *Politico* reported that she will be leaving her post in mid-May, a move that could prove disastrous.

MSNBC writer Steve Benen said, "You see the problem: Team Trump is the subject of the investigation Mary McCord has helped lead. Indeed, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who's been accused of lying under oath about his own communications with Russian officials, has recused himself from the investigation, but it may soon fall to him to choose McCord's acting successor."

As Benen pointed out, McCord was best suited to run this investigation because she is a career investigator, not a political appointee. Her neutrality could be replaced by someone from the Trump administration, which could lead to a biased outcome.

"I think it would be hugely troubling if [the Trump administration] put a political appointee, who had not been nominated, not been confirmed by the Senate into this job to investigate the president...." Matthew Miller, a former DOJ spokesperson, told *MSNBC*. "Eventually, I think it has to be a special counsel, but short of that, it has to be an acting career person until someone can be confirmed by the Senate."

Putin has denied interfering with the American election, and he and the institute, which is run by retired Russian foreign intelligence officials, refused to comment on *Reuters*' story.

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What do you think of Russia's alleged influence in the 2016 election? Let us know in the comments below.

