

Republicans Investigating Russian Meddling Say They Found No Collusion - Even as Mueller Probe Continues

'We found none,' GOP Intelligence Committee member says, announcing their probe into Trump and Russians over; Mueller investigation continues.

✘ President Donald Trump speaks during a ceremony honoring the World Series Champion Houston Astros, in the East Room of the White House, Monday, March 12, 2018, in Washington. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)Evan Vucci/AP

U.S. House Intelligence Committee Republicans said on Monday the panel had finished investigating Russia and the 2016 U.S. election, and found no collusion between President Donald Trump's campaign and Moscow's efforts to influence the vote.

The committee Republicans said they agreed that Russia sought to influence the election by spreading propaganda and false news reports via social media. However, they disputed the findings of the Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency and Federal Bureau of Investigation that Moscow sought to aid Trump, who won a surprise victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton.

"We're through with interview phase. We're now in the report drafting phase," Republican Representative Mike Conaway, who has led the panel's investigation for the past year, told Reuters.

✘ In this March 8, 2018, photo, Rep. Mike Conaway, R-Texas, left, at the Capitol in Washington. Andrew Harnik/AP
Representative Adam Schiff, the top committee Democrat, strongly disagreed, and blasted the announcement as a premature shutdown.

> ***'He must be stopped!' Who is Adam Schiff and why is Donald Trump so afraid of him? <<***

The House investigation, one of three main congressional probes of Russia and the 2016 investigation, and possible collusion or obstruction of justice by Trump or his aides, has been marred for months by partisan wrangling, including the release of rival Republican and Democratic memos related to the probe.

The House Intelligence Committee's chairman, Republican Representative Devin Nunes, recused himself from the investigation last year amid reports he had a secret meeting at the White House. Nunes denied wrongdoing.

The House Republicans made their announcement even as Robert Mueller, the U.S. special counsel for the Russia probe, seems to be stepping up his investigation. Last week, former Trump campaign aide Sam Nunberg spent six hours before a grand jury called by Mueller, and former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort pleaded not guilty to criminal charges.

"While the Majority members of our committee have indicated for some time that they have been under great pressure to end the investigation, it is nonetheless another tragic milestone for this Congress, and represents yet another capitulation to the executive branch," Schiff said in a statement.

Conaway rejected that charge.

Trump took to Twitter to note the announcement, typing in all capital letters, that the House committee had found no evidence of collusion or coordination after a 14-month-long "in-depth investigation."

Findings expected

Republican members of the House of Representatives committee had been saying for weeks they were near the end of the interview phase of the probe, saying they needed to release their findings to prepare for the next general election in November.

Democrats have accused committee Republicans of shirking the investigation in order to protect the Republican president and his associates, some of whom have pleaded guilty to charges including lying to investigators and conspiring against the United States.

Trump has repeatedly denied collusion between his campaign and Russia. Russia

denies meddling in the 2016 U.S. campaign.

Schiff said evidence was “clear and overwhelming” that U.S. intelligence agencies’ assessment was correct that Russia sought to boost Trump, hurt his Democratic rival Hillary Clinton and sow discord.

“On a whole host of investigative threads, our work is fundamentally incomplete, some issues partially investigated, others, like that involving credible allegations of Russian money laundering, remain barely touched,” Schiff said.

Conaway accused Democrats of seeking to prolong the probe ahead of the mid-term elections. The Republicans’ current control of both houses of Congress is up for grabs in the November vote, and early polls show they face a difficult fight in particular to retain a majority in the House.

“There’s opportunity for this investigation to go on forever if in fact you don’t want to come to any conclusions... if you want to make hay in the run up to the election,” Conaway said in a telephone interview.

The House Republicans’ announcement shifts attention across the Capitol to the Senate Intelligence Committee, which has been conducting its own investigation. Republicans and Democrats have both described that probe as far less partisan than the House’s.

The House Republicans said they had already completed a draft version of what they said would eventually be the committee’s final report on the investigation.

Conaway said he hoped to work with Schiff on the probe but Democrats are expected to release their own report.

Source: <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/gop-probe-into-russian-meddling-tell-fox-they-found-no-collusion-1.5896318>

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