# John Ratcliffe On Politicizing Intelligence

**Highlights:**

* John Ratcliffe released declassified material, which was rejected by a bipartisan Senate committee, on Clinton’s 2016 campaign ahead of the 2020 election.
  + In May 2020, Ratcliffe was sworn in as the director of national intelligence.
  + Ratcliffe approved selective declassifications of intelligence that aimed to score political points.
  + Before the 2020 election, Ratcliffe declassified Russian material on Hillary Clinton’s 2016 campaign.
  + The material asserted that Clinton approved a scheme to associate Trump with Putin and the Russian hacking of the DNC.
  + Ratcliffe, acknowledging fears of Russian “fabrication,” released the material to Sen. Graham.
    - In his letter, Ratcliffe himself said the Russian intelligence analysis “may reflect exaggeration or fabrication.”
  + The allegation was previously rejected by the Republican-controlled Senate Intelligence Committee.

## Ratcliffe Released Declassified Material, Which Was Rejected By A Bipartisan Senate Committee, On Clinton’s 2016 Campaign Ahead Of The 2020 Election

### May 2020: Ratcliffe Was Sworn In As The Director Of National Intelligence

**May 2020: Ratcliffe Was Sworn In As The Director Of National Intelligence.** According to Fox News, “John Ratcliffe was sworn in Tuesday morning as the next director of national intelligence, taking the reins from Richard Grenell, who served in an acting capacity at the post for the last three months. Grenell swore in Ratcliffe at his new office. Ratcliffe was confirmed by the Senate last week on a 49-44 vote. His installment comes as the intelligence community once again finds itself in the middle of a political firestorm, this time over whether Trump associates were improperly ‘unmasked’ in intelligence reports during the latter days of the Obama administration.” [Fox News, [5/26/20](https://www.foxnews.com/politics/ratcliffe-sworn-in-as-director-of-national-intelligence)]

**Ratcliffe Was A Vocal Critic Of Special Counsel Mueller’s Investigation Into Russian Interference In The 2016 Election.** According to Fox News, “He [Ratcliffe] was one of the most vocal critics of former Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election.” [Fox News, [5/26/20](https://www.foxnews.com/politics/ratcliffe-sworn-in-as-director-of-national-intelligence)]

### Ratcliffe Approved Selective Declassifications Of Intelligence That Aimed To Score Political Points

**Ratcliffe Approved Selective Declassifications Of Intelligence That Aimed To Score Political Points.** According to the New York Times, “He [Ratcliffe] has approved selective declassifications of intelligence that aim to score political points, left Democratic lawmakers out of briefings, accused congressional opponents of leaks, offered Republican operatives top spots in his headquarters and made public assertions that contradicted professional intelligence assessments.” [New York Times, [10/9/20](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/09/us/politics/john-ratcliffe-intelligence.html)]

### Before The 2020 Election, Ratcliffe Declassified Russian Material On Hillary Clinton’s 2016 Campaign

**Ahead Of The 2020 Election, Ratcliffe Decided To Release Unverified Intelligence On Hillary Clinton’s 2016 Campaign.** According to the New York Times, “None of the moves have dismayed his critics, or intelligence officials inside the C.I.A. and the National Security Agency, as much as Mr. Ratcliffe’s decision to release unverified intelligence last week that mentioned Hillary Clinton. Intelligence professionals said the material could be Russian disinformation, but even if its substance — that Russian intelligence had information that Mrs. Clinton’s 2016 campaign planned to tie Mr. Trump to the Kremlin’s election hacks — were true, it hardly demonstrated anything nefarious about her.” [New York Times, [10/9/20](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/09/us/politics/john-ratcliffe-intelligence.html)]

### The Material Asserted Clinton Approved A Scheme To Associate Trump With Putin And The Russian Hacking Of The DNC

**The Classified Material Ratcliffe Laid Out Suggested That Russian Intelligence Had Acquired Information That Clinton Had Approved A Plan For Her 2016 Campaign To “Stir Up A Scandal” Against Trump By Tying Him To The Russian Hackers Who Broke Into The DNC Servers.** According to the New York Times, “In a letter to Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina and the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Mr. Ratcliffe laid out snippets of previously classified reports suggesting that Russian intelligence had acquired information that Mrs. Clinton had approved a plan for her 2016 campaign to ‘stir up a scandal’ against Mr. Trump by tying him to the Russian hackers who had broken into Democratic servers.” [New York Times, [9/29/20](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/29/us/politics/john-ratcliffe-russian-disinformation.html)]

### Ratcliffe, Acknowledging Fears Of Russian “Fabrication,” Released The Material To Sen. Graham

**Ratcliffe Laid Out Snippets Of Previously Classified Reports In A Letter To Senator Graham, Chairman Of The Senate Judiciary Committee.** According to the New York Times, “In a letter to Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina and the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Mr. Ratcliffe laid out snippets of previously classified reports suggesting that Russian intelligence had acquired information that Mrs. Clinton had approved a plan for her 2016 campaign to ‘stir up a scandal’ against Mr. Trump by tying him to the Russian hackers who had broken into Democratic servers.” [New York Times, [9/29/20](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/29/us/politics/john-ratcliffe-russian-disinformation.html)]

#### In His Letter, Ratcliffe Himself Said The Russian Intelligence Analysis “May Reflect Exaggeration Or Fabrication”

**Ratcliffe Himself Said The Russian Intelligence Analysis “May Reflect Exaggeration Or Fabrication.”** According to the New York Times, “The letter on Tuesday was the first time Mr. Ratcliffe had released material dismissed by other officials as unverified rumor. He initially embraced that assessment, saying that ‘the Russian intelligence analysis may reflect exaggeration or fabrication.’ The intelligence agencies have stopped short of definitively assessing the material as disinformation.” [New York Times, [9/29/20](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/29/us/politics/john-ratcliffe-russian-disinformation.html)]

* **Ratcliffe Later Added That It Was “Not Russian Disinformation.”** According to the New York Times, “But in a statement hours after the release of the letter, Mr. Ratcliffe appeared to caveat his own warning. ‘To be clear, this is not Russian disinformation and has not been assessed as such by the intelligence community,’ he said. ‘I’ll be briefing Congress on the sensitive sources and methods by which it was obtained in the coming days.’” [New York Times, [9/29/20](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/29/us/politics/john-ratcliffe-russian-disinformation.html)]

### The Allegation Was Previously Rejected By The Republican-Controlled Senate Intelligence Committee

**The Special Counsel And The Republican-Led Senate Intelligence Committee Had Evaluated And Rejected The Information In The Years Since.** According to the New York Times, “Other officials — including Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel appointed by the Justice Department, and the Republican-led Senate Intelligence Committee — had evaluated and rejected the information in the years since, according to three current and former officials familiar with those inquiries.” [New York Times, [9/29/20](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/29/us/politics/john-ratcliffe-russian-disinformation.html)]

**Senator Warner Of The Senate Intelligence Committee Called The Declassification “Very Disturbing.”** According to the New York Times, “‘It’s very disturbing to me that 35 days before an election, a director of national intelligence would release unverified’ rumors that originated from Russia, said Senator Mark Warner of Virginia, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee.” [New York Times, [9/29/20](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/29/us/politics/john-ratcliffe-russian-disinformation.html)]