

Data firm CEO: Reached out to WikiLeaks about Clinton emails

November 11 2017, by Chad Day

A data firm that worked for President Donald Trump's campaign reached out to WikiLeaks during the campaign about obtaining emails related to Democrat Hillary Clinton, the company's CEO said.

Alexander Nix, CEO of Cambridge Analytica, said the approach was in "early June 2016" after WikiLeaks Editor Julian Assange had publicly claimed he had Clinton emails and planned to publish them. Nix said his [company](#) asked a speaker's agency representing Assange whether WikiLeaks "might share that information," but Assange turned him down.

Nix's comments Thursday at the Web Summit technology conference in Lisbon, Portugal, were his first acknowledgement that he had sought emails from WikiLeaks. Assange had previously told The Associated Press that WikiLeaks had rejected a "request for information" from Cambridge Analytica. The Wall Street Journal first reported Nix's comments.

Cambridge Analytica's role in the president's [campaign](#) has caught the attention of congressional committees probing Russia's interference in the 2016 [election](#) and any possible coordination with Trump associates. The company is backed by Robert Mercer, a billionaire Trump supporter. Before joining the Trump administration, former White House strategist Steve Bannon also served as a vice president at the company.

The Trump campaign paid Cambridge Analytica nearly \$6 million for data management. The campaign's first payment to the company was on July 29, 2016, according to Federal Election Commission records. But the Journal reported Friday that Nix's outreach to WikiLeaks came while Cambridge Analytica was in contract negotiations with the campaign in June. At that time, the company had already sent some of its employees to help the campaign, the Journal reported.

A spokesman for Cambridge Analytica and a related company, SCL Group, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

During the Web Summit interview, Nix denied that his company was involved in any Russian election meddling.

"We did no work with Russia in this election. And moreover, we would never work with a third-party state actor in another country's election campaign," he said.

He also called the outreach to Assange "very benign." He said it stemmed from an article in The Guardian newspaper in early June 2016 that said "WikiLeaks was going to publish a huge amount of information that could be very relevant to the election and could impact it sincerely."

Nix appeared to be referencing a June 12, 2016, article that was based on Assange's comment to a British television network that WikiLeaks had "upcoming leaks in relation to Hillary Clinton" that were in the form of emails.

On Thursday, Nix said that after he saw the article, he asked his "office to reach out to, actually it was a speaking agency that represents Julian Assange to ask if he might share that information with us and we received a message back from them that he didn't want to or wasn't able to."

"And that was the end of the matter," Nix added.

Last month, Assange confirmed that WikiLeaks was approached by Cambridge Analytica prior to November 2016 but he declined to provide specifics about the interaction, other than saying it was a "request for information."

Assange's comments came in response to a story from The Daily Beast that reported that Nix's outreach was about possibly obtaining the 33,000 emails that Clinton said were deleted from her private server. Those emails have never been released.

© 2017 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Data firm CEO: Reached out to WikiLeaks about Clinton emails (2017, November 11) retrieved 16 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-11-firm-ceo-wikileaks-clinton-emails.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.