

Democrats defend FBI as Republican memo shows anti-Russia campaign built on illegal spying

Eric London
5 February 2018

Democratic Party and intelligence officials rushed to defend the “integrity” of the FBI over the weekend, following Friday’s release of a memo by Republican Congressman Devin Nunes concerning FBI spying on Trump associates. The memo shows that the Obama administration relied on politically biased information to obtain a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) court wiretap of former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page just weeks before the 2016 election.

The memo details illegal conduct by a ruling class that governs by conspiracy. In an escalation of infighting between two equally reactionary sections of the ruling class, one section is letting the public in on a dirty secret.

The response from Democrats expressed fear that the memo will undermine the credibility of the fraudulent investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller into Trump’s alleged ties to Russia.

The entirety of Sunday’s press coverage was turned over to this single issue, with each speaker talking as though he or she was reading from a script. Appearing on ABC’s “This Week with George Stephanopoulos,” California Democrat Adam Schiff called the report “misleading” and “one-sided” and expressed fear that the memo would “undermine the FBI, discredit the FBI [and] discredit the Mueller investigation.”

Former Obama administration Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland said on “Face the Nation,” “When we fight with each other, when we question our institutions, that is a great day for Vladimir Putin.”

“The release of this memo did not have to happen,” added former Acting CIA Director Michael Morrell on

the same program. The release “undermines the credibility of the FBI in the public’s eyes,” he said.

Another former CIA director, John Brennan, told Chuck Todd on “Meet the Press” that the FBI under Obama was justified in wiretapping Page. Citing the Russians’ “diabolical cultivation” of intelligence assets, he said, “I thought it would have been derelict if the FBI did not pull in the investigative threads on American persons who might have been involved with Russia, working on their behalf either wittingly or unwittingly.”

The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* have each tried to downplay the significance of the memo’s contents.

In an article titled “The Nunes memo won’t stop Robert Mueller,” *Washington Post* writer Eugene Robinson begins by implying that the memo is all smoke and no fire: “Cough, cough, cough. The smoke around here is so thick I can hardly breathe.”

The *New York Times*’ Bret Stephens wrote an op-ed titled “Devin Nunes’s Nothingburger,” in which he writes: “There is no there there... in modern parlance we’d call it a nothingburger, but the bun is missing, too.”

This contradicts the fact that before the memo was released, leading Democrats and intelligence agents were screaming that the memo’s publication would have a devastating impact on “national security.” But the memo does not reveal troop movements, base locations or secret codes. Instead, the information in the Nunes memo *does* show that the Obama administration used fraudulent pretenses to unconstitutionally wiretap political opponents of the Democratic Party.

On October 21, 2016, the FISA court granted the

Obama administration's Department of Justice and FBI request to wiretap Page, a close Trump associate and a US citizen. The FISA court then extended the warrant three times at 90-day intervals, including after Trump won the November election.

The US Constitution requires that the government show “probable cause” before a judge can grant a warrant to surveil a US citizen. In the antidemocratic FISA court setting, warrant requests take place in secret and without an adversarial attorney present to argue against granting the warrant. In 2013, whistleblower Edward Snowden revealed that this court had rubber-stamped the Bush and Obama administrations’ requests to store the phone and text records of the whole population. The FISA court rejected just 12 out of 34,000 warrant requests from 1979 to 2013.

The law requires, however, that prosecutors inform any court of bias or unreliability in the sources they are using to acquire a search or surveillance warrant. The Nunes memo shows that the Obama administration failed to do so in its efforts to spy on Page and portray Trump as a Russian dupe.

When the Obama administration asked the FISA court for a warrant two weeks before Election Day, it relied heavily on the so-called “Steele dossier.” The Steele dossier was commissioned by the Democratic National Committee and the Clinton campaign, who paid intelligence contractor Christopher Steele \$160,000 through the DNC-linked firm Fusion GPS to find information showing Trump’s alleged ties to Russia.

The Obama administration relied on this dossier to acquire its warrant. The Nunes memo asserts that “Deputy [FBI] Director [Andrew] McCabe testified before the [House Intelligence] Committee in December 2017 that no surveillance warrant would have been sought from the FISC [FISA court] without the Steele dossier information.” The Nunes memo points out that in June 2017, former FBI Director James Comey told a congressional committee that the dossier was “salacious and unverified.”

The Obama administration did not notify the FISA court that it knew the Steele dossier was uncorroborated. It also did not notify the FISA court that the Democratic Party funded the dossier, as required by law.

In addition, the memo notes that the Obama

administration withheld evidence that Steele had acted because, in his words, he was “desperate that Donald Trump not get elected.” The memo also states that the Obama administration did not tell the court that then-Associate Deputy Attorney General Bruce Ohr’s wife was employed by Fusion GPS, the same firm the DNC used to acquire the Steele dossier, and that her job entailed digging up opposition research linking Trump to Russia.

Democrats and intelligence agents claim the publication of this unconstitutional effort to spy on US citizens and political opponents undercuts the “integrity” of the military-intelligence agencies. The whole history of the FBI, CIA, NSA, and other spy agencies is an unbroken thread of surveillance, assassination and illegality.

Regardless of the Republicans’ own partisan motives for making it public, the Nunes memo is further proof that the Democrats’ anti-Russia campaign is nothing more than the form taken by bitter conflicts within the ruling class, in which there is no progressive and democratic side. In this conflict, the Democrats have emerged as little more than shells of the military-intelligence apparatus, seeking to orient American foreign policy decisively toward a military confrontation with Russia.

The entire political system is characterized by criminality, in which the conflicts within the ruling class are fought out through the methods of conspiracy. Such methods will be employed all the more ruthlessly against the working class.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)