

Release of Nunes memo throws anti-Russia campaign into disarray

By Andre Damon
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The Democratic Party was thrown into disarray Friday after the publication of a classified memo exposing as a factionally-motivated witch-hunt the investigation by leading intelligence agencies into the Trump administration's alleged collusion with Russia.

The so-called Nunes memo, which Democratic lawmakers, US intelligence agencies, and major newspapers had been seeking to block for days, alleges that the FBI under the Obama administration used discredited sources and withheld key information to initiate a wiretap of former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page.

The Democrats responded to the prospective release of the Nunes memo with undisguised hysteria, declaring that it threatened National Security and was insufficiently deferential to the US intelligence agencies. Now that the memo has been released, Democrats' claim that it contains sensitive national security secrets has been exposed as lies.

The memo, written by Republican House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes, claims that the FBI obtained a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance (FISA) court authorization to wiretap Page in the fall of 2016 based on a memo compiled by former British intelligence official Christopher Steele.

The so-called Steele dossier, which was released to the public last year, made lurid allegations that Russian government officials had recordings of Trump engaging in "perverted sexual acts" with prostitutes "which have been arranged/monitored by the FSB [Russian intelligence service]." According to the Nunes memo, FBI director James Comey called the Steele Dossier "salacious and unverified" in congressional testimony in June 2017.

In perhaps its most explosive passage, the memo alleges that Andrew McCabe, a deputy FBI director

who just stepped down this past week, testified before the House Intelligence Committee in December that "no surveillance warrant would have been sought... without the Steele dossier information."

In addition, the FISA application "ignored or concealed [Steele's] anti-Trump financial and ideological motivations," i.e. the fact that his "research" had been funded by the Clinton campaign.

The Republican memo does not specify what information was collected by the wiretap, or whether it captured any conversations with Trump.

The contents of the memo are another demonstration of the manufactured and partisan character of the anti-Russia campaign and the Democrats' allegations that Trump "colluded" with Russia. What is playing out is a partisan battle between two criminal and reactionary factions of the state apparatus, centering ultimately around differences over foreign policy.

The release of the memo once again underscores the fact that the US intelligence agencies have massively intervened in US politics. This is true not only with regard to the concocted narrative about "collusion" between Trump and Russia, but equally so with James Comey's public announcement about re-opening an investigation into Hillary Clinton's emails just days before the presidential vote, which Clinton claimed may have cost her the election.

The memo has undermined the aura of professional impartiality that the Democrats and their semi-official news outlets, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, have sought to cultivate around the so-called "intelligence community."

The real fear of Democrats is that the exposure of the anti-Russia campaign will undermine the credibility of the FBI. "The selective release and politicization of classified information sets a terrible precedent and will

do long-term damage to the intelligence community and our law enforcement agencies,” declared Rep. Adam Schiff of California, the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, on Friday.

Schiff added, “If potential intelligence sources know that their identities might be compromised when political winds arise, those sources of vital information will simply dry up, at great cost to our national security.”

But all such arguments about “national security” have been rendered absurd by the release of the document, which contained no sensitive information besides the wrongdoing of the FBI and the Democrats—including Schiff himself.

In an editorial published Friday, ahead of the document’s publication, the *New York Times* accused congressional Republicans of “undermining the credibility of the law enforcement community,” which they had “once defended so ardently.”

It was left to the satirical news website the *Onion* to point out the obvious absurdity of such arguments:

Stressing that such an action would be highly reckless, FBI Director Christopher Wray warned Thursday that releasing the “Nunes Memo” could potentially undermine faith in the massive, unaccountable government secret agencies of the United States. “Making this memo public will almost certainly impede our ability to conduct clandestine activities operating outside any legal or judicial system on an international scale,” said Wray, noting that it was essential that mutual trust exist between the American people and the vast, mysterious cabal given free rein to use any tactics necessary to conduct surveillance on U.S. citizens or subvert religious and political groups.

Responding to the Democrats’ allegations that the publication of the document would threaten “national security,” journalist Glen Greenwald tweeted, “What conceivable argument is there that any part of the Nunes Memo could jeopardize national security?”

The *Times* editorial effectively argues that no documents critical of the actions of the US intelligence apparatus should be published. To make this point, the

Times quotes Democratic Senator Ron Wyden, who argued against the release of the memo on the grounds that the public would “see this release as proof that selective classification is used more often to deceive them than to protect them.”

But it is, of course true that “selective classification” is used to deceive the American people. This was demonstrated by the release of the classified Pentagon Papers in 1971, which documented how flagrantly and extensively the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations lied to the American people about the Vietnam War.

As *The Post*, the recently-released film by Stephen Spielberg effectively documents, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* made the decision at the time to defy the Nixon administration and publish the Pentagon Papers, rejecting the spurious argument that their publication would harm “national security.”

The editorial published in the *Times* Friday reads like a cruder version of the arguments put forward by the Nixon White House to block the release of the Pentagon Papers. If one were to take the editorial at face value, one would conclude that, if the *Times* had the Nunes memo in its sole possession, it would never have published it.

The *Times* has become little more than a mouthpiece for the US intelligence agencies, whose aim is to prevent the dissemination of any information that they see as harmful to the interests of the American ruling class and the capitalist state.

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