

WHY ARE REPUBLICANS STILL SQUEALING ABOUT FISA APPLICATIONS IF HPSCI REPORT CEDES CARTER PAGE CONCERNS?

Republicans in Congress continue to make fairly breath-taking demands on Rod Rosenstein and Christopher Wray in what seems to be an attempt to create a bogus claim of non-responsiveness that Trump can use to fire one or both of them.

First there was the demand that the House Intelligence Committee get all of FBI's non-grand jury records on the Mueller investigation, a demand Paul Ryan backed. Then there was the push to publish the Nunes memo over DOJ's objections. More recently, after Wray's doubling the number of FBI staffers (to 54) in an attempt to meet a Bob Goodlatte document deadline for FISA, Hillary investigation, and McCabe firing materials proved insufficient, Jeff Sessions has put Chicago's US Attorney, John Lausch, in charge of the response. As with Sessions' selection of Utah US Attorney John Huber to review other GOP demands, Sessions seems to be giving himself and his deputies cover from fairly ridiculous GOP demands.

Nevertheless, such concessions have not entirely sheltered Trump's main targets from the kinds of complaints that might expose Robert Mueller's investigation below them. Mark Meadows, one of the lead attack dogs in this congressional obstruction effort, even suggested Congress might impeach Rosenstein for failing to meet a 2-week deadline on a Bob Goodlatte subpoena.

Through it all, the complaints that FBI used the Steele dossier as one piece of evidence in Carter Page's FISA application, persist. This, in spite of the fact that Page had been under

FISA surveillance years before, and in spite of the fact that all sides agree that the counterintelligence investigation into Trump's aides started in response to the George Papadopoulos tip from Australia.

This, in spite of the passage from the Schiff memo (including one redacted sentence) that seems to assert that FBI considered Page an on-going counterintelligence concern.

DOJ cited multiple sources to support the case for surveillance Page – but made only narrow use of information from Steele's sources about Page's specific activities in 2016, chiefly his suspected July 2016 meetings in Moscow with Russian officials. [entire short sentence redacted] In fact, the FBI interviewed Page in March 2016 about his contact with Russian intelligence, the very month candidate Donald Trump named hi a foreign policy advisor.

And the Schiff memo is consistent with what Sheldon Whitehouse (among the few other people who had read the application at the time) said.

Whitehouse: I've got to be careful because some of this is still classified. But the conclusion that I've reached is that there was abundant evidence outside of the Steele dossier that would have provoked any responsible FBI with a counterintelligence concern to look at whether Carter Page was an undisclosed foreign agent. And to this day the FBI continues to assert that he was a undisclosed Russian foreign agent.

Importantly, however, it's no longer just former prosecutors in the Democratic party who seem to confirm that Page was a real counterintelligence concern, and therefore legitimately a FISA target. At least, that's what these two passages from the GOP House Intelligence Report suggest.

(U) Finding #23: Executive Branch officials did not notify the Trump campaign that members of the campaign were assessed to be potential counterintelligence concerns.

(U) Recommendation #20: When consistent with national security, the Intelligence Community should immediately inform U.S. presidential candidates when it discovers a legitimate counterintelligence threat to the campaign, and promptly notify Congress.

If you're complaining that the Intelligence Community didn't inform Trump about that members of his campaign team were "assessed to be potential counterintelligence concerns," (and this likely includes Paul Manafort, as well as Page), then you can't very well complain if FBI obtained a FISA warrant once those counterintelligence concerns left the campaign team. Hell, you're practically inviting the FBI to obtain such a warrant *while* the counterintelligence concern is on the campaign, to help warn the candidate.

I know this is a bit to ask, but the GOP should not be able to have it both ways, to try to discredit the Trump investigation by pointing to the use of the Steele dossier in targeting Page, even while demanding FBI should have shared what it knew about Page because he posed a risk to Trump.