

THE IMPLICATIONS OF RUSSIA'S IDENTIFICATION OF FBI'S ASSETS

Yahoo has a piece describing a series of compromises Russia inflicted on FBI – and, to a lesser degree, CIA – communications systems in the lead-up to the 2016 operation.

American officials discovered that the Russians had dramatically improved their ability to decrypt certain types of secure communications and had successfully tracked devices used by elite FBI surveillance teams. Officials also feared that the Russians may have devised other ways to monitor U.S. intelligence communications, including hacking into computers not connected to the internet.

Among the secondary damages, it appears, were some of the FBI's assets.

Spooked by the discovery that its surveillance teams' communications had been compromised, the FBI worried that some of its assets had been blown, said two former senior intelligence officials. The bureau consequently cut off contact with some of its Russian sources, according to one of those officials.

At the time of the compromise, some of the FBI's other Russian assets stopped cooperating with their American handlers. "There were a couple instances where a recruited person had said, 'I can't meet you anymore,'" said a former senior intelligence official. In a damage assessment conducted around 2012, U.S. intelligence officials concluded

the events may have been linked.

Even assuming this is the only time in recent years Russia compromised the FBI's assets, that raises interesting possibilities given the prominence of once and former FBI assets among those who reached out to Trump flunkies during the 2016 operation. Henry Oknyansky, who first dangled damning information on Hillary to Roger Stone in May 2016, claimed on multiple occasions to be a former FBI asset. While he claimed ongoing communications with the FBI in 2013, the last time he got public benefit parole entry to the US was in 2012. Then there's Felix Sater, an even more celebrated FBI informant. It's not entirely clear how long he continued to work for the FBI, but his 5K1.1 letter was submitted in 2009 and the first efforts to unseal his docket date to 2012.

At the very least, former assets would know how FBI communicated, to expose or protect the Trump flunkies accordingly. But once and former assets might also still enjoy a kind of whitelist where they might otherwise be surveilled. And while the Trump flunkies have not done this with Sater (although Judicial Watch *just* filed a lawsuit for this), when Stone had to admit to his contact with Oknyansky, he immediately claimed it was an FBI sting and not a genuine dangle.